

SOUTH AFRICA'S LEADING GAMING, COMPUTER & TECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE

NAG

PC PLAYSTATION XBOX WII

HEAVENLY SWORD

HANDS-ON
TIME WITH
THE PS3'S
HOTTEST GAME



PACKARD BELL GAMES

WE SOAK UP SOME SUN
AND BEER IN PORTUGAL

THE WINDS OF CHANGE

WE CHAT TO THE DEVELOPERS
OF DARKWIND AND AQUARIA

PSU ROUNDUP

THE BEST POWER
MONEY CAN BUY



TABULA RASA

Richard Garriot and
Starr Long talk about
their new MMO



If the DVD is missing, Cortana has it

NAG is powered by



VOL 10 ISSUE 6 09.2007
SOUTH AFRICA R39.00



09

“A GLORIOUS FUTURE FOR
ONLINE GAMING” – PC Zone



AVAILABLE 28.09.2007

PC
DVD
ROM



“BATTLEFIELD
KILLER”

— IGN.com

“THE MOST
REWARDING TEAM-BASED
SHOOTER YET”

— GameSpot



ENEMY TERRITORY QUAKE WARS™

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE MOST ANTICIPATED MULTIPLAYER GAME OF THE YEAR, VISIT:

WWW.ENEMYTERRITORY.COM

A Game By



Developed By



Distributed By



© 2007 Id Software, Inc. All rights reserved. Published and distributed by Activision Publishing, Inc. under license. Developed by Splash Damage Ltd. Enemy Territory: QUAKE Wars and ID are trademarks of Id Software, Inc. Activision is a registered trademark of Activision Publishing, Inc. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners.



www.megarom.co.za

Tel: +27 11 361 4800
sales@megarom.co.za

THERE ARE FEW DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SPORTS AND WAR
CHOOSE YOUR BATTLE
NOW AT TOYS R US & REGGIE'S

PC TIGER WOODS
R299.90



22 METRE LINE



PS3 TIGER WOODS
R599.90



PS2 TIGER WOODS
R399.90



PSP TIGER WOODS
R399.90



XBOX TIGER WOODS
R499.90

TOYS R US

22



FIFA 08 COMING SOON
PS2, PSP, PS3,
XBOX 360 & PC
ARRIVING 25 SEPTEMBER 2007

PC RUGBY 08
R299.90



22 METRE LINE

PS3 MOH: AIRBORNE
R599.90



XBOX MOH: AIRBORNE
R499.90



PC MOH: AIRBORNE
R299.90



PS2 RUGBY 08
R399.90

22 METRE LINE

22

Reggiers

REGGIE'S STORES: EASTERN CAPE • THE BRIDGE (041) 363-2145 • WALMER PARK (041) 368-4523
FREE STATE • WELKOM (057) 353-2035
GAUTENG • BALFOUR PARK (011) 786-1300 • CRESTA (011) 476-5623 • EASTGATE (011) 622-1473
• FOURWAYS (011) 465-1536 • HILLFOX (011) 475-0790 • MENLYN PARK (012) 348-1420
• MONTANA (012) 548-5502 • SANDTON (011) 884-7009 • THE GLEN (011) 435-9121 • THREE RIVERS (016) 423-6308 • VAAL MALL (016) 931-2507 • WONDERPARK (012) 549-0391
KWAZULU-NATAL • BALLITO (032) 946-1713 • CHATSWORTH (031) 403-4419 • GAME CITY (031) 309-1962
• NEWCASTLE (034) 312-4690 • PIETER-MARITZBURG (033) 342-1907 • PINETOWN (031) 702-3588 • RICHARDS BAY (035) 789-6729
• SOUTH COAST MALL (039) 315-0128 • SPRINGFIELD (031) 263-0096
MPUMALANGA • WITBANK (013) 692-3115
NORTH WEST • POTCHEFSTROOM (018) 297-7773 • RUSTENBURG (014) 537-3852
NORTHERN CAPE • KIMBERLEY (053) 832-2401
NORTHERN PROVINCE • MAKHADO (015) 516-1054
WESTERN CAPE • CAPE GATE (021) 981-5120 • GARDEN ROUTE MALL (044) 887-0039 • MITCHELL'S PLAIN (021) 376-3270 • PARKLANDS (021) 557-7921

TOYS R US STORES: EASTERN CAPE • PORT ELIZABETH (041) 368-7842
FREE STATE • BLOEMFONTEIN (051) 444-0380/96
GAUTENG • ATTERBURY (012) 991-4050 • BOKSBURG (011) 823-5111 • CENTURION (012) 663-5453 • FOURWAYS CROSSING (011) 467-0708/9 • PARK MEADOWS (011) 615-6614 • SANDTON CITY (011) 783-0327 • WESTGATE (011) 768-4084
KWAZULU-NATAL • GATEWAY (031) 566-3772 • PAVILION (031) 265-0380
WESTERN CAPE • BELVILLE (021) 949-6030 • CANAL WALK (021) 552-8001 • GREEN POINT (021) 434-9085 • SOMERSET WEST (021) 851-4123 • TOKAI (021) 712-6593
OPENING 2007 • HEATHWAY (BLACKHEATH) • MAPONYA (SOWETO)

PlayStation®2



R1599⁹⁵
PLAYSTATION®2 SILVER CONSOLE (K Chassis)
Quarter of the size. Built-in modem (55221)



R279⁹⁵
PLAYSTATION®2 Dual Shock Controller
Analogue control with pressure sensitive action buttons and analogue sticks. Built-in vibration function. Compatible with all PS games. Available in silver or black (55222)



PLAYSTATION®2 8MB Silver Memory Card
Essential for saving games (55231)

R199⁹⁵

2 dance mats



Logic3 2 Dance Mats + Dance Fest or Street Dance (60338)



R499⁹⁵



Assorted PS2 Games
Rogue Galaxy* (62653)
Ratatouille. (62655)



2 microphones

FROM R449⁹⁵ EACH



PS2 AV Cable (126863) (61586)

R499⁹⁵



PS2 S Video AV Cable (126864) (61587)

R749⁹⁵

SELECTED STORES

PLAYSTATION®3



R6599⁹⁵
PLAYSTATION®3 + Moto Storm + Sixaxis Controller + Resistance Fall Of Man
60GB storage capacity. Wireless motion sensor controller. 4 USB 2.0 ports Bluetooth™ 2.0. Supports Memory Stick, SD, CompactFlash & USB mass storage class devices. Blu-ray, DVD, CD & SACD disc media. Backwards compatible with all PS2 & PS1 games (61338, 61344, 61342, 61339)



R199⁹⁵
Logitech Chillstream Controller (62348)



R449⁹⁵
Logitech Precision Controller
Makes use of 2.4GHz Cordless Freedom™ technology. Delivers super-precise control from up to 10 metres away and for over 150 hours. 2 Year warranty (62351)



Assorted PLAYSTATION®3 Games
Sing Star Next Generation (62165) Ratatouille (62658)
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08 (62447) Ghost Recon 2, Advanced Warfighter (62670)
Blazing Angels 2, Secret Missions of WWII (62660) Warhawk (62657)

R599⁹⁵ EACH

XBOX 360

XBOX Pro + Hitman, Blood Money + Just Cause + Battlestations, Midway Bundle (59524, 62569)

R3999⁹⁵



Assorted XBOX Games
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08 (62449)
Blazing Angels 2, Secret Missions of WWII (62661)
Medal of Honor: Airborne (62671)

FROM R499⁹⁵ EACH

SELECTED STORES



XBOX FO Cable (127555) (61590)

R499⁹⁵



XBOX Component AV Cable (127552) (61588)

R999⁹⁵



XBOX VGA AV Cable (127556) (61675)

R999⁹⁵



XBOX Video + FO Audio AV Kit Cable (127553) (61589)

R1099⁹⁵

Selected stores: Canal Walk, Cresta, Gateway, Menlyn

PC GAMES



Assorted PC Games

Battlefield 2 (62435) FIFA 06 (62431) Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (62436)

Lord of the Rings II, Battle for Middle Earth (62434) Rugby 06 (62432) Need for Speed, Most Wanted (62437)

R99⁹⁵ EACH



Requires full version of The Sims to play

The Sims 2 Bon Voyage Expansion Pack (62662)

R129⁹⁵

Requires full version of Guild Wars to play



Guild Wars, Eye of the North Expansion Pack (62663)

R199⁹⁵



Assorted PC Games

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08 (62439)

Medal of Honor, Airborne (62672)

Blazing Angels 2, Secret Missions of WWII (62664)



R299⁹⁵ EACH



Stranglehold (62666)

R349⁹⁵



Visit www.incredible.co.za for a full range of the latest graphics cards



Assorted PSP Games

Ratatouille (62667)

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08 (62441)

Wipeout Pulse (62668)

Monster Hunt Freedom (62669)

FROM R399⁹⁵ EACH

PSP Black +

Killzone Liberation Game

Features an 11.25cm full colour TFT screen. Stereo speakers. Wireless capabilities. Games & movies load from a UMD (Universal Media Disc). 4 Hours playing time battery life (62184)

LIMITED STOCK

R1999⁹⁵



Let's play!

Offers valid until
30 September 2007

Incredible Call Centre 0860 011 700

Prices include 14% VAT. Prices stated herein are recommended retail and are subject to change. Credit approval is subject to the terms and conditions as stipulated on the application forms. All standard terms and conditions of Incredible Connection & suppliers herein apply. E&OE.

* Titles available during September 2007.

Release dates subject to change without prior notice


Incredible
CONNECTION
www.incredible.co.za

MEDAL OF HONOR
AIRBORNE

***HEROES JUMP.
ENEMIES FALL.***



PLAYSTATION 3
Coming Soon

A dark, atmospheric scene from the video game Medal of Honor: Airborne. Several soldiers in military uniforms and helmets are visible, some holding rifles. The setting appears to be the interior of a large, dark structure, possibly a ship or a bunker, with industrial elements like pipes and metal beams. The lighting is low, creating a somber and intense mood.

*Our war starts here.
The hell below will scatter us our separate ways.
In that chaos, each one of us has a choice to make.
The church bell tower?
The rooftop of the gatehouse?
Or the middle of an enemy encampment?
We decide our own fate.
The first step is everything.*

moh.ea.com





ON THE DVD

DEMOS

Armageddon Empires
Civilization 4: Beyond the Sword [Charlemagne & Final Frontier]
GHOST Hunters
Thread Space Hyperbol
Transformers: The Game

DRIVERS

ATI Catalyst 7.7 for Windows XP
ATI Catalyst 7.7 for Windows Vista 32-bit
NVIDIA ForceWare 162.18 for Windows XP
NVIDIA ForceWare 162.22 for Windows Vista 32-bit

FLASH

Command & Conquer: Tiberium Wars (Episodes 1 & 2)
Super Mario Bros Z Season 2 Opening
Xombie [Chapters 7 through 9]

FREE GAMES

Babo Violent 2
Ghostbusters Retro Remake
System Shock
UltraStar
Wormux

INDIE DEMOS

The White Chamber

LOCAL

Game - SEBMD
Video - rAge 2007 teaser trailer

MODIFICATIONS

All Stars for C&C Generals: Zero Hour
The Specialist for Half-Life

PATCHES

Command & Conquer 3 [v1.06]
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2 [v1.00 to v1.02]
Rainbow Six: Vegas [v1.00 to v1.05]

RAGE 2007

Official rAge 2007 teaser trailer

TRAILERS

Burnout Paradise
Call of Duty 4: Reveal
E3: Call of Duty 4
E3: Crysis
E3: Friday Fallout
E3: Hellgate London trailer
E3: Hellgate London
E3: Killzone 2
E3: Mass Effect
E3: Microsoft Conference
E3: Microsoft PC
E3: Nintendo Conference
E3: Spore
E3: Tabula Rasa
E3: Unreal Tournament 3
Halo 3: Documentary
Halo 3: E3 2007 Live Action
Halo 3: E3 2007
Halo 3: Et Tu, Brute?
Halo 3: Filmsharing
Halo 3: Halo 2 MP comparison
Halo 3: Halo Band
Halo 3: Is Quisnam Protero Damno
Halo 3
Metal Gear Solid 4
Resident Evil 5
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed
Supreme Commander: Forged Alliance

REGULARS

- 12 Ed's Note
- 14 Inbox
- 22 Bytes
- 30 Calendar
- 111 Name That Game
- 134 Multiplayer - News
- 136 Multiplayer - MMO
- 138 Game.Dev
- 140 Lifestyle - Movies & Comics
- 145 Subscriptions
- 146 Game Over

COLUMNS

- 36 Opinion - Miktar's Meanderings
- 38 Opinion - The Domain of The_Basilisk
- 40 Opinion - Dammit
- 42 Opinion - Ramjet
- 116 Hardware - Ground Zero
- 118 Hardware - Hardwired
- 144 Lifestyle - Raven's Loft

FEATURES

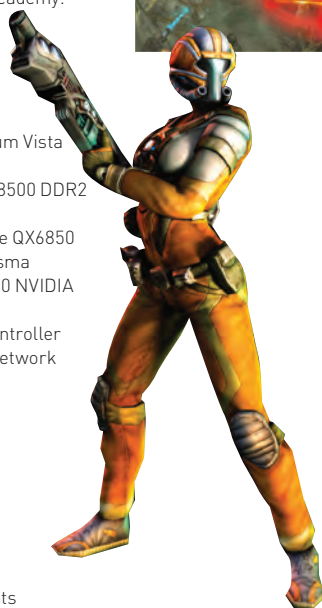
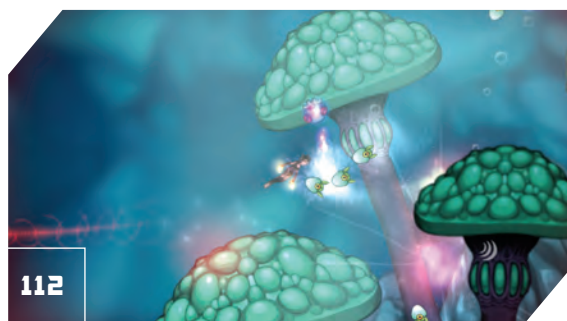
- 18 rAge 2007 Preview
- 32 Q&A: Psychic Software & Darkwind: War on Wheels
- 44 Halo 3
- 76 Tabula Rasa
- 110 Looking Back: Planetscape: Torment
- 112 Q&A: Aquaria
- 114 For the Love of the Game
- 128 H@rdcore: Power Supplies
- 132 Tiberium Wars Military Academy: Part 1 of 3

HARDWARE

- 120 ASUS M2N32-SLI Premium Vista Edition
- 121 Mushkin Enhanced XP-2 8500 DDR2 RAM
- 122 Intel Core 2 Quad Extreme QX6850
- 123 Sonic High Definition Plasma
- 124 Cooler Master Stacker 830 NVIDIA Edition
- 125 Microsoft PC Wireless controller
- 125 Microsoft 360 Wireless Network Adapter
- 126 Asus Xonar D2
- 127 Canon Powershot S5 IS

PREVIEWS

- 52 Preview Intro
- 54 Heavenly Sword
- 56 Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights
- 58 Fallout 3



- 60 Company of Heroes: Opposing Fronts
- 62 Star Wars: The Force Unleashed
- 64 Civilization: Revolution
- 66 Conan
- 66 Universe at War
- 68 Painkiller: Overdose
- 68 Crash of the Titans
- 70 Contra 4
- 70 Jenga
- 72 World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King
- 72 Rise of the Argonauts
- 74 Gears of War
- 74 Space Siege

REVIEWS

- 84 Reviews Intro
- 88 Two Worlds [PC]
- 90 Genesis Rising [PC]
- 92 Tenchu Z [360]
- 94 Project Sylpheed [360]
- 96 Rugby 08 [PS2]
- 98 Rainbow Six Vegas [PS3]
- 98 Rainbow Six Vegas [PSP]
- 100 Call of Juarez [360]
- 100 WarTech: Senko no Ronde [360]
- 102 Transformers: The Game [360]
- 102 Vampire Rain [360]
- 104 Harry Potter and The Order of The Phoenix [PS3]
- 104 PaRappa The Rapper [PSP]
- 106 Driver: Parallel Lines [PC]
- 106 32nd America's Cup [PC]
- 108 Wii Sports [Wii]
- 108 Flyboys [PC]



Gamer's Choice!

GIGABYTE Gaming Solutions



Do More...Faster!



GIGABYTE Quad-Core Optimized Motherboards

Robust Power Design

6 phase power or above

Optimized FSB Routing



(DQ6 / DS rev. 2.0 series ATX Platform)

Ultra Durable

All-Solid Capacitor design



(DQ6 / DS series)

Silent & Cool

Silent-Pipe



(DQ6 / DS4)

Crazy Cool



(DQ6)

High Performance & Future Upgrade

Outstanding Overclocking & Overvoltage



(S3 above)

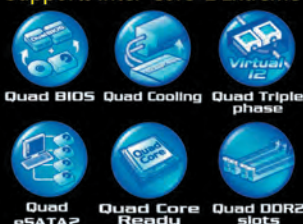
Vista Premium Ready & Advanced Audio Quality



(DQ6 / DS rev. 2.0 series ATX Platform)

6-Quad GA-965P-DQ6 (rev. 2.0)

Supports Intel® Core™2 Extreme Quad-Core Processors



Ultra Durable
All-Solid
Capacitor Design

QUAD
CORE
OPTIMIZED



S Series GA-965P-DS4 (rev. 2.0)

Supports Intel® Core™2 Extreme Quad-Core Processors



Ultra Durable
All-Solid
Capacitor Design

QUAD
CORE
OPTIMIZED



D (Ultra Durable) : All-Solid Capacitor Designed Motherboards * Windows VISTA Ready Requirement : ¥ High Definition Audio ¥ DirectX 9.0 VGA



Johannesburg:
Tel: (011) 203 1000
Fax: (011) 203 1135

Cape Town:
Tel: (021) 555 7136
Fax: (021) 555 7187

Durban:
Tel: (031) 571 8838
Fax: (031) 571 8865

Port Elizabeth:
Tel: (041) 398 7082
Fax: (041) 398 7135

Bloemfontein:
Tel: (051) 430 0000
Fax: (051) 430 1144

www.gigabyte.co.za

These speed settings are not guaranteed by GIGABYTE. The specification and pictures are subject to change without notice. All trademarks and logos are the properties of their respective holders. Any overclocking is at user's risk. GIGABYTE Technology shall not be responsible for any damage or instability to your processor, motherboard, or any other components.

GIGABYTE
TECHNOLOGY

I F YOU GO THROUGH this issue, you're likely to find errors – lots of them. Nati, our buffer between chaos and grammar and our bastion of good English was ill for the entire duration of the mag-making process. The rest of us were frankly too rushed, illiterate or indifferent to catch all the problems. Still, it's a solid issue with lots of stuff you will enjoy. Miktar, who I met through South Africa's first unofficial *Ultima Online* shard (he created it), got to chat with two of the most influential men in the MMO world about *Tabula Rasa*, plus we managed to corner one of the Bungie staffers to talk about *Halo 3*. Speaking of which, next to this column is the cover first considered for this issue. The current cover, though, won by a wide margin. This happens all the time. If you take a peek at last month's issue, the poster in the back was supposed to be the original cover – until we got that stunner that now fronts the August issue.

Back to the errors and delays, another reason for the tardy checking process was that I was overseas with Packard Bell when the issue production started. I wouldn't bring that up, except I feel obligated to issue a warning: if you are planning to travel somewhere, don't go through Heathrow and, as far as I'm concerned, don't use British Airways. The airline's staff was nothing if not short, rude and irritated – from the stewardesses with the attitudes of disgruntled teachers to the desk employees who went to some lengths to make us understand what a favour they were doing us by getting us on a new flight. Incidentally, we missed the connecting flight because of Heathrow's ridiculous security lines, which appeared to give BA license to give away our seats. Oh, and BA managed to lose our bags as well, which is a big pain since you can now only take one piece of carry-on luggage roughly the size of a very small dog.

Look, I've never been a fan of air travel, but since I started going on these trips in 2001, things have steadily gotten much worse and far more unpleasant. Worst of all, the airlines seem to have forgotten that the passengers on-board are not all 10-year olds, but people who spent substantial amounts of money to take that trip. It truly is more of a pleasure working with a government department than anyone in an airport these days.

James Francis
Editor



NAG

NAG is not available in large format print, brail or on audio tape.

managing editor

michael james
michael.james@tidemedia.co.za

editor

james francis
james.francis@tidemedia.co.za

games editor

miktar dracon
miktar.dracon@tidemedia.co.za

contributing editors

regardt van der berg
russell bennett

technical writers

toby hudson
neo sibeko

staff writer

alex jelagin

copy editor

nati de jager

contributors

adam lieberman
anton lines
bradley hatton-jones
clive burmeister
danny day
eddie francis
justin slabbert
megan hughes
sean james
tarryn van der byl
walt pretorius

sales manager

len nery
len.nery@tidemedia.co.za
+27 84 594 9909

marketing and promotions manager

jacqui jacobs
jacqui.jacobs@tidemedia.co.za
+27 82 778 8439

art director

chris bistline

designer

chris savides

photography

dreamstime.com
chris bistline

office assistant

paul ndebele

tide media

p o box 237
olivedale
2158
south africa
tel +27 11 704 2679
fax +27 11 704 4120

subscription department

subs@tidemedia.co.za

internet

www.nag.co.za
www.tidemedia.co.za

printing

print ability

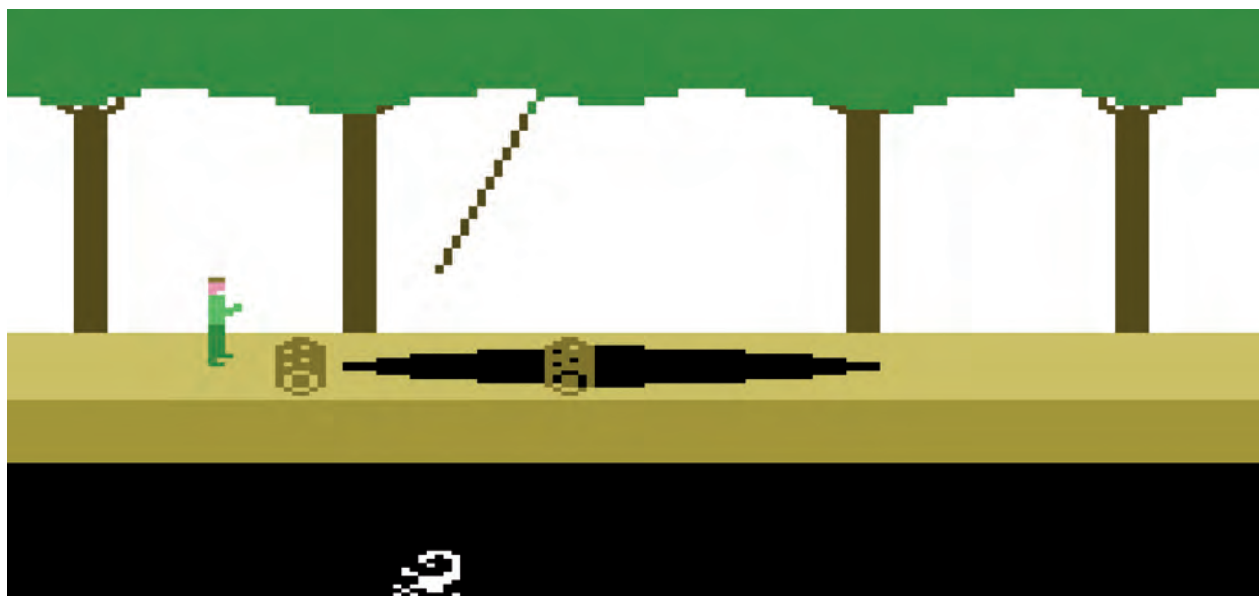
distribution

jmd distribution



Copyright 2007 Tide Media.
All rights reserved. No article or picture in this magazine may be reproduced, copied or transmitted in any form whatsoever without the express written consent of the Publisher. Opinions expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Publisher or the Editors. All Trademarks and Registered Trademarks are the sole property of their respective owners.

Ancient Chinese proverb: Man who walks naked through revolving door is going to Bangkok.



NAG REVIEW RIGS SUPPLIED BY:

GIGABYTE
TECHNOLOGY

Upgrade Your Life™



3D AURORA 570
Performance with style Series



GIGABYTE

Just add coolant!



It's not just a case!



Mercury, with built-in watercooling system, is not just a case! It offers a quick and beautiful way for power users to have extreme over-clocking experience.

3Dmercury



MOST IDIOTIC RAMBLE

MORON: Siphwe Ntuli**RUBBISH:** SA politics & NAG

I'VE BEEN BUYING NAG for more than 6 years. The first issue I bought was the one with *Sacrifice* on the cover, before then I didn't know that gaming magazines existed. I have kept each and every NAG I bought, about half are still in their plastic cover (I keep the plastic after unwrapping). I used to buy NAG as well as PC Format every month - PC Format for its Software & hardware features and NAG for games. I stopped buying PC Format 3 or 4 years ago. In that issue the editor used every little opportunity to compare South Africa to the asshole of the world at a time when it was a fad among white South African to complain about everything e.g. TELKOM. The government, Affirmative action, etc. in the media.

I find myself in a very similar position with NAG (and no I won't stop buying). The domain of the Basilisk and the letters page were the first things that I read in your magazine. That is up until his article about how South Africa sucks and how much UK is better etc. etc. Now Megan is talking about how the huge number of prisoners are helping the

government stay in power. What does that have to do with gaming? Are you saying that all prisoners are black and that if they did not vote we would not have ANC in power? Look, I buy NAG to read about games not to get politically biased information, if I wanted political information I just watch the SABC. We all have different views and opinions about this country and some people have benefited and are still reaping the enormous benefits of apartheid while the rest of us are suffering. I have stopped reading all Anton Lines or whatever's opinion page. And no, I'm not equating the garbage that was written by that asshole with Megan's article, but I think we should be more sensitive about writing about political opinions because some of us have suffered a lot under apartheid. Let's leave politics to politicians, please!

We locked the NAG staff in the closet, so this month Übergamer will reply to your complaints! Yes, sure, okay, maybe...MAYBE politics don't belong in a gaming magazine. But you need to understand where it's all coming from. Everyone becomes a game writer because they are lazy asses who

The 'Idiotic Ramble' prize is sponsored by EA South Africa. The winner receives two games for coming up with the most eclectic chicken scratch.

IMPORTANT STUFF! PAY ATTENTION!

Land Mail: P.O. Box 237, Olivedale, 2158

Cyber mail: letters@tidemedia.co.za

Important: Include your details when mailing us, otherwise how will you ever get your prize if you win...

TOPIC FOR**NEXT MONTH:**

Do you have/want an HDTV?

Why/why not?



don't want to get a real job and find a career at a fast food joint too daunting. But after a while we realised that we didn't get the easiest, best jobs in the world. Those belong to politicians [all politicians, regardless of party, ideological or bribe persuasion]. It's inevitable. NAG secretly wants to become a political publication, thus ushering its writers into their own careers as politicians. If all else fails, we're changing the name to "Please adopt me, Richard Branson!"

MORON: Dusk**RUBBISH:** What makes a game?**UP GUYS, I'M NEW** to the whole letter thing, so

Sbare with me. Great mag, as if you didn't know. I've been reading NAG since you were still printed as New Age Gaming, and I've enjoyed every issue, although I always had a problem with these clueless teeny bop gamers that rate a game on its graphics or length, or something so trivial. These are part of what make up a game, that goes without saying, but in my opinion, the two most important aspects of a game are the gameplay and the storyline. How many of you still play *Diablo 2* or *Super Mario*, or a point and click adventure of some sort, or I Spy with my Little Eye... ok, never mind that last one. These were great games, from the day you dropped your first 20c (yes, I'm an Elder, watch and be amazed), or the first time you loaded up your unstoppable level 1 necromancer until today. I've played a Christmas list of games that have been released over the years, and I've got to admit, I'm not all that impressed. I've hardly finished any of them. This could be my mistake. But not many of them have kept me interested long enough, because once you get through all the bells and whistles, your left with a bargain bin game with 'new physics' or 'realism'. A game isn't about realism; it's about 'fakeism', it's about entertainment. If you want realism, go outside. From the first game of Pong ever played, games were about keeping us out of our parents' hair long enough for us to have brothers and sisters. We've seem to have forgotten that, and it's heartbreaking. Who cares if the PS is better than the Xbox? I'm up for debate on that or if the PC is better than a console. Why are flash games like *Alien Hominoid* giving us such blissfully frustrating hours of entertainment, surely it can't be better than *Oblivion* (zzzzzz)? Before you lynch me, let me point out the extreme boredom of running around for half an hour. Run...run...run...oooh, a real tree, wait, don't we have those outside... run...run...run...a wolf, slice it to pieces in your five minutes of fun...run...run. I think you get my point. Well, you can keep your fancy big words and 'realistic physics' and I'll keep my mad mushroom people and pixelated secret cow levels. Lets just be a bit forgiving if the particle

effects aren't up to scratch, and see the game for its entertainment value. Till next time, enjoy blowing stuff up...with your mind.

Whaaaaaahhhhhhh?! Your stupidity makes us feel... stupid! Yeah! Seriously! What is this nonsense? Graphics don't MATTER?! We bet you wouldn't say that in person! We bet that if you had to face the proud parents of Carmack, that dude from Epic and those geeks making Crysis, you won't be able to utter it. You would just shatter the pride they feel for their kids doing something productive like amazing graphics. You also won't be able to handle the sad, sad faces of all the Nvidia and Ati stockholders and executives. Graphics don't matter? Man, that would just render their lives meaningless! Look, not every company can afford or find a funny grinning idiot that looks good in suit jackets and Link shields like Miyamoto! Even EA had to go second-rate with Will Wright, who looks really awkward carrying a fake shield and sword. Seriously, dude, think of who you hurt with your senseless and thoughtless comments! Sheesh!

MORON: Gerlu de Bruin**RUBBISH:** Do you still pirate games?**AAARRRRR ME MATEYS! COUGH-COUGH,**

Agggaaakkk spit! As you can see I'm an old pirate. Not old of age but old because I pirate no more. I can still remember the days I had an illegal copy of *Duke Nukem* on a stack of stiffies teetering precariously next to my dad's PC. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? For some reason one of the last three was always a faulty stiffy, Murphy seemingly ruling my life during my early years. Maybe it was a sign, who knows...

These days it's ridiculously easy to pirate. If you have a fast enough connection you can download to your hearts content on the plethora of file-sharing sites available on the

web. Otherwise just pick up your latest copy of a certain paper and buy an illegal copy for around R60. If you can't even scrounge together a measly R60, there's always the friend of a friend that can provide you with a copy.

So why don't I pirate games any more when it is so easy these days?

It's simple. I made myself a promise back in the day; "The day I can afford the games and buy my own PC, that's the day I'll hang up my eye patch". Sure, sure, it was a typical excuse and I should really not have pirated because it was ultimately wrong. Okay fine, I admit it! I was wrong and I apologize to everyone who doesn't drive a SLK because of me pirating your software. I promise that I've made up for it. If you don't believe me you can come and have a look at my 50 plus collection of original games that I nurture with the ferocity of a lioness.

If you continue to pirate, stop using lame excuses like I did. At least admit that you are what you are, a lousy pirate. Money is not an excuse anymore; games are much cheaper these days. If you can afford your Ferrari like PC with its lightning quick graphics card, then you can surely afford the petrol to fuel it. In fact, there just is no excuse for pirating.

For me as an old pirate, it comes down to this. We shouldn't pirate because it's wrong. I'm tired of reading about how PC games are going down the drain because of piracy. Maybe one day there won't be any games left to pirate. If that doesn't scare you current pirates, then nothing will. This old pirate can only hope that other pirates will follow suit to avoid the looming disaster. But that's probably a futile wish. As long as there are games to pirate, there will be pirates.

So if I can't persuade you current pirates, then this old pirate bestows a curse upon you scurvy bastards. "May the fleas of a thousand camels infest your armpits and... other hairy

These days it's ridiculously easy to pirate. If you have a fast enough connection you can download to your hearts content on the plethora of file-sharing sites available on the web.

The September issue of SACM is on sale now at your local newsagent for R29.95.

SACM



www.sacm.co.za

Live the Technology Life

Published by Tide Media

The authority on current information technology and the hardware, software, concepts and people that drive it.

The new-look 124-page SACM is a must-read for IT enthusiasts, computer and gadget users, SOHO and micro businesses and everybody with an interest in the latest advancements in computers, cellular technology, software and peripherals.

The magazine also covers topics ranging from emerging technological trends to Internet and online activities, as well as digital entertainment in the home, behind-the-scenes looks at the technology involved in making games and movies, and software that will enhance the reader's computing experience. Each issue is also bundled with a free CD filled with essential software applications and utilities.

ON THE FORUM

QUESTION: Do you think the censorship was heavy-handed or might some games be pushing it a bit too far?

Repline: Sometimes government intervention is necessary; Like in sport, we all know the rules, but we almost never play fair sometimes a referee is needed. Pushing it too far should have it's consequences.

Rebbo Reformed: I believe that many violent games should be banned, but then again I don't really play those kind of games, I just don't like the thought of my nephews playing that game.

Q-Man: Listen, you make the games, and I will decide if it's too brutal or not for ME. Last I checked, I was more than capable of making my own decisions in life, and I don't need some politician telling me what I can or can no play.

Frozenfireside: I think its both-Games are always pushing the limits and so the censorship ratings need to follow the change and adapt.

brazed: I think its both-Games are always pushing the limits and so the censorship ratings need to follow the change and adapt.

Jedi: In the past I would have definitely have said it was heavy handed, but after looking at society in general in this day and age, I'd have to say I agree with the governments of the world stepping in and saying enough is enough.

LazyDemoni: Censorship might be justified as a way to protect the public, but we live in the so called "information age" so nobody has an excuse for not knowing. I agree that things which are proven to incite hate or violence should be banned but video games have not been proven to do this.

wisp: The fact that so little games actually get banned makes me think that maybe this game went a little too far.

DarthStorm: We can all think for ourselves and we can all keep an eye on our own children. We don't need to bring the government into this. Banning just means an increase in pirate sales.

Fredder: In my opinion the game developers were pushing it too far. Its just too brutal.

PloPshoP: The censorship was heavy handed. I don't believe that one should really call label the censorship/banning as being in the interest of morals and the public. Politicians lobby for these causes for one reason only: voters. They want to get the game banned and be the hero of the day. Like in sport, there is no place for politics in gaming.

Have your say on the NAG forums
<http://forums.tidemedias.co.za>

The Wii changed my look on next-gen consoles. It has great graphics, unique gameplay, and is way cheaper than the 360 and PS3.

areas!" Hey, why is that guy scratching his bum? Aaaaarrrrrr! Me thinks I'm in for some bashing.

Aaaaarrrrrr yourself. Piracy? What's that? Look, piracy is very important. If gamers had to blow all their money on games, how would they afford copies of FHM and the occasional date? We've got loads of dating experience and we know it's a fact that chicks don't like to pay, especially when you order the lobster and 'buy' a round for everyone at the bar. So why go and blow all our precious cash on some lousy title that a nice guy at the flea market can supply to us for a fraction of the cost? Besides, it's not REAL piracy. Never, ever in our lives have we gotten a game from a guy with an eye patch. Well, once. Okay, it wasn't really a game. He said it was and then invited us to stick our hands into his coat pocket. We're not playing that game again.

MORON: Daniel Garratt

RUBBISH: NAG's Direction

AS ALWAYS A GENERALLY good issue. DEFINITELY better than PC Format – I think they spend so much time ogling their cover porn that they forget how to cut and paste the 2-month-old reviews from PC Format UK.

I really like the fact that NAG is SOUTH AFRICAN, not just UK/US with a find and replace for rands! On that note, PLEASE!!!! Do not cut down on your reviews. Yes, James, we can go to the websites for reviews, but TRUST is a very big part of a review. Your readers trust NAG's judgment, and that's why we buy the mag. The in-depth reviews are my favourite part – I don't want a snapshot, I want to know what it felt like to play the game for 12 hours or longer. I enjoy lying on the couch and experiencing the game with the reviewer for a while.

The websites are aimed at US or UK gamers whose spare change goes a lot further – they can afford to buy a game for a couple of hours then discard – WE can't! Therefore the in-depth reviews are critical.

(Thinking about it further: we can also go to the websites for news, hardware reviews, previews, etc – in other words the whole mag... Are you going to cut down the whole mag?? NAG as a package deal is what works)

I'd also like to suggest "re-reviews" of the games that are now on budget – those are often the games I'm looking at (R100-R150 area) but can't remember the reviews!

Kudos to your Hardware guys – some very good reviews, and good points made, particularly about the resolutions (i.e. look at best card suitable for your resolution (1,280x1024) – might save you a packet!).

Oh, and I'll be a voice of dissension – I thought Übergamer was a complete waste of paper. I didn't find it particularly funny, and I thought four pages AND A COVER SPLASH was a bit overkill for a weak joke – especially because many of us expected something proper, like maybe an overclocking feature, or something!

Look, don't you understand? If NAG makes the reviews LONGER, then its staff might have to write MORE. That means eventually they'll come beg the Übergamer elite to review the games for them, because they SUCK. That,

though, means that we'll be drinking LESS. We already told James to just make everything in the mag pretty pictures. No one reads anymore, anyway. Not since YouTube.

MORON: Venom

RUBBISH: We want Wii!

RECENTLY, I VISITED YOUTUBE and I came across a video clip of someone demonstrating the Nintendo Wii. I instantly fell in love with it! Playing Dragonball Z never looked like so much fun, and I never liked the Legend of Zelda. The Wii changed my look on next-gen consoles. It has great graphics, unique gameplay, and is way cheaper than the 360 and PS3. After watching I jumped to my copy of NAG and went on dozens of websites, only to find out that there isn't a release date for it in SA! Realising that sulking won't help I went to some online shops to buy one. The cheapest one I found (on a South African site) was one on Take2. It was a hefty R3300 and a tad expensive for a high school student like me. So after all this I came to a conclusion...South African suppliers are lousy! Anyway, if possible, can one of you guys please help me out? All I need are some possible release dates or a cheaper website. Thanks a bunch; love the magazine!

The very existence of the Wii is thanks to Übergamer. Miyamoto and the loud American guy came to us and said "Über, we are royally screwed. No-one bought the Gamecube or N64 and Microsoft has so much monees that we gotta do something really awesome." So we told them exactly what they needed to know – that we are too f***ing busy sitting on this couch trying to get the carpal out of our thumbs. They didn't quite understand, so we threw the TV remote at them. It hit Miyamoto between the eyes, causing him to turn a bright rage red, so he leaped forward and started bashing our hardware editor with it. The loud American said "That looks like fun!" and tried it as well. So did we. It's a little know fact that in order for the Wii to be realised, we had to kill our hardware editor. That's where the Wii came from. Why isn't it here? As a joke Miyamoto wrote '6 million atomic rods' on the shipment boxes, so they are still stuck at customs. The government won't believe that we have a constructive use for atomic rods.

MORON: Hermann La Grange

RUBBISH: World of Warcraft

YOU KNOW WHAT WOULD be a cool idea: World of Warcraft. They released WOW almost as soon as WCIII. But of course, that is assuming that they have the manpower and resources to do so. But I really think that people would love that idea. Also, keep up the good work. Based on the quality of your magazine, you guys are really working hard.

Freaky, because we were just thinking the same thing. We also have a few other ones, like World of Guitar Hero and World of God of War (title pending). Since Übergamer writes itself (except this month), we have plenty of time, so we also figured World of GTA and some kind of Gummi Bears MMO would rock. Someone here also briefly uttered the idea for a QuakeWorld, but that's just f***ing stupid.

i play. i win. i gloat. i kick back, i catch a movie.
i hear some tunes. all thanks to one little card.

SanDisk Gaming Memory Cards maximize your world of entertainment. As powerful as they are colourful, these little cards let you get maximum performance, and take advantage of all the advanced features that turn your game devices into a fully loaded multimedia entertainment unit.



cruzer crossfire™

The Cruzer Crossfire is designed to make your PC gaming experience portable. You can save your game data, download games and demos, save your replays and more. It is also compatible with the Xbox 360.



Memory Stick RapidGX™

The RapidGX Gaming Memory Card turns your PSP into a fully loaded multimedia entertainment unit. This card provides gamers with the latest in technology and high performance, with the ease of use in managing and transferring digital media files to and from the PSP.



Memory Stick PRO Duo™

For maximum performance and to get the most out of all the advanced features on your portable gaming device, you'll need a SanDisk Memory Stick PRO Duo Gaming Card. With this card, you will be able to save your game levels, listen to digital music, play your favourite video and store game cheat codes, characters and game skins.



SanDisk®
STORE YOUR WORLD IN OURS®

FOR YOUR NEAREST SANDISK DEALER PHONE 021 423 6990 OR EMAIL info@tudorphoto.co.za

It's all the rAge...

SOUTH AFRICA'S PRE-EMINENT GAMING

and technology expo is back at the end of this month. From the 28th to the 30th (September), the fifth annual rAge event will be dazzling a more diverse audience than ever. An annual attendance growth of around 30% means that this year nigh on 20,000 visitors are expected. Not only has visitor attendance has been growing – the number of exhibitors has also been growing steadily, as well as the variety of products and services on show. While the show originally started as primarily a gaming-related event, it has since grown to encompass a host of technologically biased topics and products, including, but not limited to, computer hardware and peripherals, games and accessories, console gaming, networking and communications, movies and music, alternative gaming such as trading card games and board games, anime, lifestyle accessories such as portable music and video players, culture and literature, cellular technology, and home theatre and digital home gear. Nevertheless, despite this diversity, the emphasis of the expo is certainly on gaming and computers, and interactive electronic entertainment.

rAge 2007 will showcase the latest in games and computer technology, allowing visitors to get hands-on and close-up looks at the things they love most. Activities taking place during the weekend include loads of prize giveaways, celebrity appearances, PC gaming competitions, and sneak peeks at some of the hottest gaming titles to be released in the upcoming months. Animeworx will be hosting comic artists throughout the weekend. They will be doing sketches, autographs etc. as well as holding ad hoc workshops on how to make comics and get involved in the industry etc.

rAge 2007 will also be host to the pre-release of the *Lorwyn* expansion to *Magic*:



WHEN AND WHERE

Dates

Show Days: 28th – 30th September 2007

Times

Friday: 10h00 – 18h00

Saturday: 09h00 – 18h00

Sunday: 10h00 – 16h00

Venue

The Coca Cola Dome
Corner Northumberland Road &
Olivenhout Avenue
Northgate
Gauteng

Entry fee

R40 per person (kids under 5 free)

Website

www.rageexpo.co.za



The Gathering. A standard sealed deck format will be adhered to, just as it was last year in the *Time Spiral* pre-release at rAge 2006. The set will be officially released two weeks later, so players attending this pre-release event will be among the first to acquire cards from the new set. For more information go to www.geon.co.za.

Interested in a career in gaming? rAge 2007 will showcase a range of career opportunities that exist in the South African gaming scene. Although game development in South Africa is by no means as big as that in the Far East or the USA, the career opportunities in the world of PC and console gaming are still enormous.

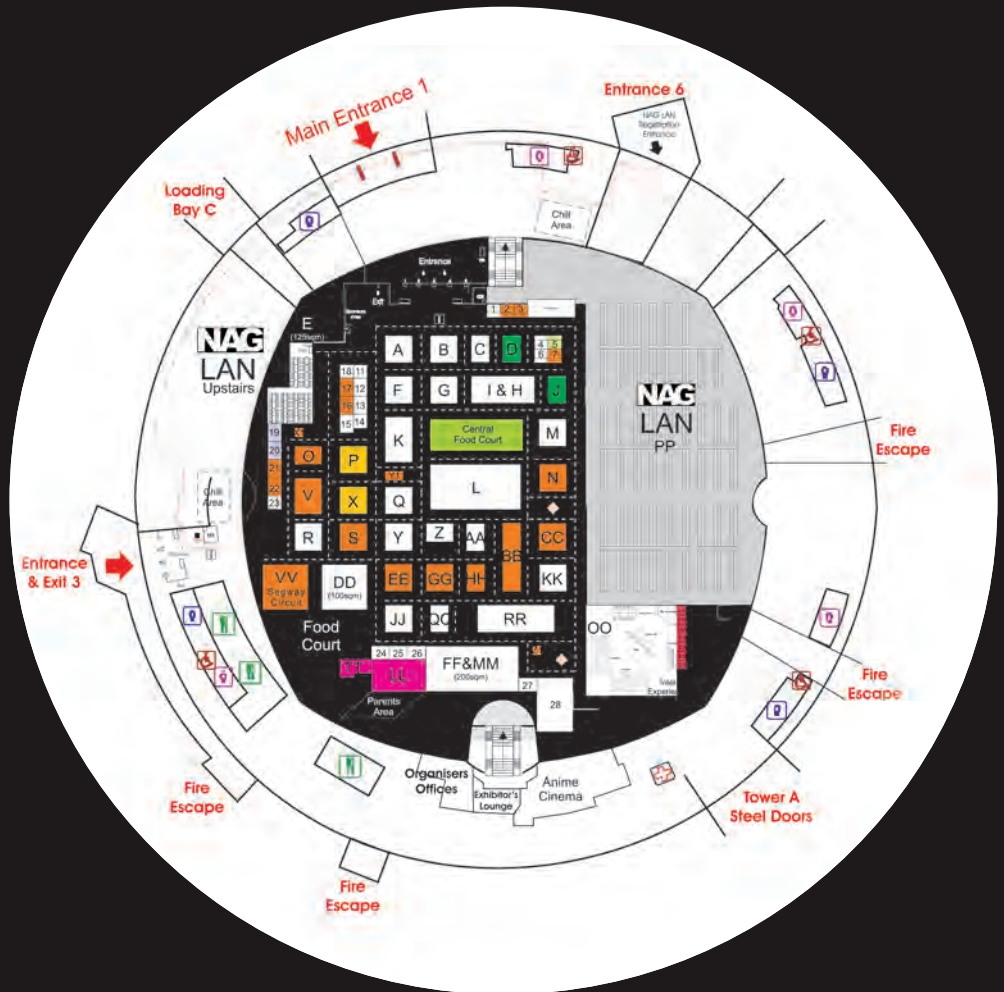
Career opportunities in the world of gaming locally exist in game design and development. Game.Dev (www.gamedotdev.co.za), a South African community of amateur, independent and professional game developers dedicated to growing game



The NAG LAN @ rAge is yet another aspect of the show that has been growing steadily. The first NAG LAN accommodated 500 eager gamers, and last year's event catered to 1,200 – this year, it will host up to 1,500! The LAN facilities will include not only seating space, but the complete networking infrastructure required to cater to the needs of that many avid gamers. The LAN runs right through the night/s and Power Play Energy Drink will be there to help you cope. The D-Link network will once again be powering the LAN, Intel will be providing the servers, and the highly capable and uber efficient VC crew will ensure that your 53 hours of LAN gaming are the best you've had all year!

- An informal Battlefield 2142 competition will be held and EA will be giving away a whopping R32,000 to the winning team;
- www.xbox-360.co.za will be hosting an informal 60-player Xbox360 LAN – details are on their website.

For more information on the NAG LAN @ rAge go to <http://forums.tidemia.co.za/nag/forumdisplay.php?f=10> **NAG**



*List confirmed at time of going to print

Terror

There are aliens in my base...
killing my dudes!

**Determination**

My brother has had that Xbox controller
for over ten minutes now. It's my turn!

**Spite**

My multifunctional PDA is better
than yours...

**Indecision**

Notebook or desktop... desktop or
notebook - I can't decide.

**Sneaky**

I wonder if my wife will notice the new
flat screen.

**Furious**

What do you mean my system
specification is too low?



rage

expo

STAY ON THE EDGE!

computers | gaming | technology

28.09.2007 - 30.09.2007

The Coca-Cola Dome | Northgate | Opens Friday 10:00 AM | R40 entry
www.rageexpo.co.za

brought to you by

NAG **SACM**

[entertainment\[africa\]\(#\).com](http://entertainmentafrica.com)

OFFICIAL ONLINE MEDIA PARTNER



SONY CUTS PS3 PRICE, BRIEFLY

SONY GRABBED THE HEADLINES of E3 this year when it announced a \$100 price cut on the PlayStation 3. The fact that this only applied to the PS3's 60GB model did little to deter excitement - within a day online retailer Amazon.com had sold out of the model, where the 60GB model rose 2,800% in popularity, and Sony could boast that it doubled its PS3 sales in the US. The move was also praised by retailers and analysts. Along with the announcement Sony revealed that a 80GB model would be introduced at \$599.

"We think the price move is great and will help drive increased interest, particularly in light of the dual functionality as a BluRay player," said a spokesperson from Best Buy. "It becomes a viable, cost effective option for people interested in next generation DVD." The price cut was only for the U.S. market, prompting speculation that something similar could happen in European stores and further guessing that Microsoft would follow suit with a 360 price reduction. This idea was encouraged by a Bloomberg article, which quoted MS Game Studios president Shane Kim as saying "We definitely are working on that [price] area." Ever vocal and visible gaming analyst Michael Pachter also threw his hat into the fray, predicting Microsoft would follow suit.

But the silver lining was followed by a huge cloud. Microsoft quickly shot down the speculation, saying it has no plans to cut the price of the 360 yet. It also turned out that the PS3 price cut isn't a permanent one. The \$100 reduction only applies to 60GB model, which Sony later revealed it has stopped manufacturing and will phase out. That means that

once there are no more 60GB models left, the PlayStation 3 will only be available at the original \$599 price tag. The electronics giant assured everyone that it has ample 60GB stock left, though. A European price cut isn't being planned either, nor will the 80GB model be released there. Instead Sony announced a pretty great starter pack - a 60GB model with two controllers and two games - for \$599. The reasoning from SCEE is that a 20GB difference isn't enough to justify the price, something we are inclined to agree with.

Regardless, the temporary U.S. cut indicates that people are eager to pick up the PS3 if the price is right. The high price, despite the cut, attracted criticism from some major industry figures. Both Nintendo's George Harrison and Microsoft's Peter Moore said the cut wasn't significant at all, rather expecting something closer to \$399. Kazumi Kitau, Konami America's chief, said the machine was still too expensive, while Capcom's CFO, Kazuhiko Abe, told Reuters a second price cut before the end of the year would bring real growth to the console's market. The CEOs of Square-Enix and Edios, John Yamamoto and Bill Gardner, both also said they feel the price is still too high to make a significant impact.

Still, Sony isn't perturbed, especially in light of the sales boost the cut caused.

"The degree of satisfaction among the consumers who have purchased the machine is through the roof. I don't think we could be happier," SCEA CEO Jack Tretton told *Newsweek*. "But there's no question that pricing has been probably our main obstacle since the introduction of the machine."



SCEA CEO Jack Tretton



EPIC GETS SERVED

CANADIAN DEVELOPER SILICON KNIGHTS (*Too Human*, *Eternal Darkness*) has filed a lawsuit against Epic for breach of contract. According to the complaint, "Rather than provide support to Silicon Knights and Epic's other many licensees of the Engine, Epic intentionally and wrongfully has used the fees from those licenses to launch its own game to widespread commercial success while simultaneously sabotaging efforts by Silicon Knights and others to develop their own video games."

It seems all this fuss was precipitated by an underwhelming display of Silicon Knights'

current project, *Too Human*, at E3 2006, where it was lambasted for technical issues and its lacklustre visuals. The lawsuit alleges that Epic withheld a "very useable" version of the Xbox 360 engine, only delivering a fully functional package in November of that year – some eight months after the contractually stipulated March deadline. This delay apparently forced Silicon Knights to write its own engine.

Epic vice-president Mark Rein has since retorted that, "We believe the claims against us are unfounded and without merit and we intend to fully defend against them."



READY TO RUMBLE OR NOT?

FOR A WHILE NOW, rumours have been circulating that a force-feedback SIXAXIS controller for the PS3 is on the way. Recently, a Sony Computer Entertainment employee confirmed to gaming-blog Kotaku that the SIXAXIS with rumble is indeed in the works and heading towards PlayStation owners.

Immersion has filed patents that seem to correlate this, the patents bear a September release date for Immersion's "Feel The Game" TouchSense technology logo to appear on the PS3 SIXAXIS controllers.

But speaking to GamesIndustry.biz, an SCEA representative stated that "The SCEA employee

referenced in Kotaku's story stated that he had read in the news that third parties are working on a controller with rumble for PS3. His comments were taken out of context."

SCEA head Jack Tretton mentioned during a round-table discussion at E3 2007 that Sony has settled with Immersion, and a rumble controller is something that could happen "down the road".

"...The bottom line is we haven't made that decision and we didn't have anything to announce or introduce [at E3]," said Tretton. In other words, the hopes for a Rumbleaxis controller still remain just that.

BUDGET TOP 20



1. The Complete CSI



2. Prince of Persia Trilogy



3. Splinter Cell Trilogy



4. Age of Empires Collector's Edition



5. Devil May Cry 3: SE



6. CSI: 3 Dimensions of Murder



7. Star Trek: Legacy



8. Dogz & Catz



9. Brothers in Arms: Earned in Blood



10. Playboy The Mansion Gold Edition



11. Pirates of the Caribbean: The Legend of Jack Sparrow



12. Dungeon Siege: Legends of Aranna



13. Rainbow Six: Lockdown



14. Rise of Nations Gold Edition



15. Rayman Raving Rabbids



16. Far Cry



17. Combat Flight Simulator 2



18. Microsoft Flight Simulator 2002



19. Rayman 10th Anniversary



20. Silent Hunter III

R99 each

megarom
PROXIMATELY DISTRIBUTED BY MEGAROM INTERACTIVE (PTY) LTD.
011 361 4800 | SALES@MEGAROM.CO.ZA
more @ www.megarom.co.za



UBISOFT

SNIPPETS

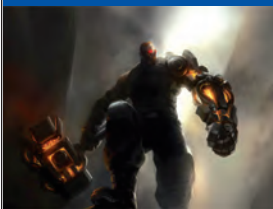
YOUR ESSENTIAL INFO, NOW IN BITE-SIZED PORTIONS!



THQ has joined **Steam** and begun to release titles like *Titan's Quest*, *Warhammer 40k* and *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* on the service.



Bizarre Creations has expanded **PGR 4's** racing quota to include bikes. Will that mean bikes and cars will be able to race against each other? That's what the screenshots seem to suggest.



Last month we reported that the Wii game **Project H.A.M.M.E.R.** was canceled. Now Nintendo says it's only been put on hold as development resources are being moved around. But that does mean we won't hear from it any time soon.



Microsoft won't be holding an **X07** this year. The annual event was where Microsoft announced a lot of its big titles and plans for gaming in the following year. A smaller UK-centric event is being considered instead.

Before **Halo**, Bungie did actually make other games, such as the terrific **Oni** and the cult-classic **Marathon** games. You'll be able to experience the latter on Xbox Live - Bungie announced that *Marathon* is being released on the 360's service.



HD-DVD VS. BLU-RAY - THE WORLD'S SMALLEST FIGHT CONTINUES

SO IS HD-DVD DEAD? Is Blu-Ray winning? Does any of this really matter? When you consider two facts - that high-def formats require the expensive purchase of a decent HDTV and that not even the two rival formats together form a drop in the bucket that forms DVD sales (DVDs outsell HD formats by at least 70 to 1), it's apt to consider that both formats, for now, might just be white elephants and their successors have a much better chance of capturing a larger part of the market. Still, a lot of time and money has been invested into the formats and the marginal sales of either has created a culture of petty mud slinging by whoever is involved. Recently Sony's Peter Dille, vice president of marketing, told Gamasutra that HD-DVD will be dead in months and isn't relevant to Blu-Ray's 10-year vision. Peter Moore, while still at Microsoft, hit back, saying that it's just speculation on Dille's part. He might be right - HD-DVD sales have been improving. According to Nielsen figures, HD-DVD hardware and software sales increased 37% and 20% respectively between Q1 and Q2 of this year. In that same period Blu-Ray hardware and software slumped 27%

and 5%. This had to do with a \$299 stand-alone player being released in the U.S., well below even the cheapest Blu-Ray player, as well as more HD-DVD than Blu-Ray title releases in Q2 of this year. According to GLK figures, HD-DVD is dominating in European hardware sales, though these figures were criticized for not factoring in PlayStation 3 sales - Sony's console has largely been responsible for Blu-Ray's larger adoption. Some analysts rebutted that this isn't relevant - standalone players are the only real indication of a format's adoption, as PS3 users don't buy the machine just to watch movies. All in all it's really just a bunch of noise from both camps over scraps.

"With the total number of titles available for each format differing by only 20-30 titles at this time, the real-world gap in content between the two formats is in actuality not as large as many would perceive," said Paul Erickson, market analyst with IMS Research. "Consumers in the US and Europe continue to show the greatest sensitivity to price, rather than content or branding, in their purchase decision for standalone high-definition players."

SPIELBERG AND EA IN CAHOOTS

FIRST ANNOUNCED BACK IN

2005, the three game deal between EA and Steven Spielberg is in the news again. Despite so much time having passed in the interim, however, precious little is known about this mysterious agreement. In a recent interview with GameDaily, EA Los Angeles studio overlord Neil Young remained coy, saying "I can't really share any game details, but recall our original announcements was for three projects. Well, two of those are underway right now in the studio."

What we do know is that one of these, imaginatively codenamed PQRS, will be a Wii exclusive and is due out sometime this year. What's it about? Some sort of action puzzler, apparently.

Then there's the other title, codenamed LMNO, rumoured to be some sort of action adventure, and set for a multi-platform release on PC, 360, and PS3 at some as yet undetermined date. Alas, it's not *The Dig 2: Moar Digging*, but a secret agent game that sees players partnering with a computer-controlled lady friend. The X-Files meets James Bond? We'll bite. Steven Spielberg told Newsweek, "The challenge is, can the game have an emotional impact on players while they are actively manipulating the world?" Keep an eyeball on this one.



GAMES FOR WINDOWS? ID APPROVES...

IN THE PAST JOHN Carmack has sounded less than optimistic about the *Games for Windows* brand from Microsoft, but Todd Hollenstead and Tim Willits see it in a different light. Asked if it was just a cynical attempt to try and squeeze more cash out of the PC genre and promote Vista, Willits disagreed.

"Microsoft sometimes gets a bad rep for being Microsoft. But they really do know how to write software. So for Games for Windows you'll have a certification, it'll go through Vista, you'll have the correct ESRB ratings. So that works. You'll have

good security, you'll have a link in with Xbox Live ... some people say it's a little too Big-Brotherish, but it's a legitimate progression of making the PC feel more - not like a console, but like a closed system." This is good feedback for Microsoft, which is finally seeing several major DirectX 10 titles surface in the market. Perhaps as a signal that enforcing new games onto Vista wasn't such a good strategy, the company plans to expand Live for Windows to XP as well. But this might have been necessary anyway - *Gears of War*



will be released for both XP and Vista, but you'll need to sign up to the Windows Live service to play it online.



CONSOLE CRYISIS A POSSIBILITY – CRYTEK CEO

A PART FROM THE LOCATION of the Ark of the Covenant and Jack the Ripper's identity, the other pressing mystery of our times is whether *Crysis* will appear on consoles or not. The idea has been shot down many times by developer Crytek, only to be bolstered again by outside rumors or comments from within the *Crysis* camp. Now Crytek's own CEO, Cevat Yerli, has decided not to downplay speculation. Speaking to CVG, he said that theoretically, anything could run anywhere. Fortunately he expands on that ambiguous statement, adding that "*Crysis* could be on the 360 or PS3. It

requires optimisation, that's what we've always communicated. What you would not do is make *Crysis* on PS3, 360 and PC for a single shipping date, because we would lose the quality focus." That is a bit of a different opinion than what Crytek held before. In the past the developer simply said that *Crysis* would only appear on the PC. Yerli did add, though, that there are no plans to port *Crysis* to any console. A post for a PS3 programmer has been advertised on the developer's site for several months, but the company said that this is related to a different project.



METAL GEAR SOLID 4 TO STAY ON PS3, OR NOT, OR PERHAPS...

THE SPECTER OF THE PlayStation's favourite son, Solid Snake, sharing his bounty with other platforms has surfaced again. In an interview with Reuters, the head of Konami's North American and European operations Kazumi Kitauke went on to state that while *Metal Gear Solid 4* remains a PS3 exclusive for the time being, the need to ensure a good return on the huge investment placed on the game could force it towards multiplatform.

"Since *Metal Gear Solid* was born for the PlayStation, we would like to keep it a PlayStation game. But we might have to take some steps," Kitauke added.

Sony American boss Jack Tretton rebutted at E3 2007 by announcing *Metal Gear Solid 4* as an exclusive PS3 title. The announcement also revealed that it would be released worldwide in 2008, while series creator Hideo Kojima (once again) promised that this *Metal Gear* is the finale to the series, for him at least.

"So, all the story plot, the characters, the mysteries, will be revealed," he announced. But the *MGS* franchise isn't stopping there. Konami has announced that an online and mobile version are in the works as well.



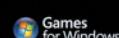
A genetically enhanced shooter.

bioshockgame.com



"...Think of BioShock as a Wild Kingdom of the weird."

1UP.com



© 2002-2007 Take-Two Interactive Software and its subsidiaries. Developed by Irrational Games. BioShock, 2K Games, the 2K logo, Irrational Games, the Irrational Games logo, and Take-Two Interactive Software are all trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. in the USA and/or foreign countries. All other marks and trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Unauthorized copying, reverse engineering, transmission, public performance, rental, pay for play, or circumvention of copy protection is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved.



According to a Ubisoft rep at E3, no demo is planned for **Assassin's Creed**. Our guess is it's because of the challenging control system, which would just fair poorly in a short demo.



The movie might have disappeared into oblivion for now, but the **Halo** props haven't! As is the tradition with these things, special effects house **WETA** built a fully-functional **Warthog**. Wouldn't you love one of these?

Thief and **Deus Ex**'s creator, **Warren Spector**, will start working for Disney. The media empire bought his company Junction Point Studios.



While chatting to *Gamasutra*, **Blizzard** revealed that it has a small third team working on something that isn't related to **Starcraft II** or **World of Warcraft**. The company wouldn't say more, other than it's "really awesome".



The next **N-Gage** is now only due later this year in Q4. Nokia also announced that over 35 games are in development for the mobile gaming platform. Could this be the big one?



John Carmack is not a fan of dedicated physics processors. "I am not a believer in dedicated PPU's. Multiple CPU cores will be much more useful in general, but when GPUs finally get reasonably fine grained context switching and scheduling, some tasks will work well there," he told *Boot Daily*.



GUITAR HEROES SLASH AND METALLICA ROCK(BAND) ON

ANYONE WHO'S SEEN THE *Guitar Hero III* promo video of Dragonforce's frenetic fret fest *Through the Fire and Flames* (omg) must surely be licking their chops and keeping their fingers on ice in giddy anticipation. But wait, there's more. Activision recently confirmed rumours that Slash will feature as a boss and unlockable character, with Guns 'n Roses' sleaze anthem *Welcome to the Jungle* rounding out the cock rock combo. The publisher has also signed an exclusive partnership deal with Gibson USA to include some 20 of the company's most beloved axes in-game, as well as wireless Les Paul peripherals for the Xbox 360, PS3, and Wii versions of the game. The PS2 version will ship with a Kramer model, while both will have removable faceplates. Featured songs include the Smashing Pumpkins' *Cherub Rock*, Muse's *Knights of Cydonia*, the Rolling Stones' *Paint it Black*, glam rock cheese party *Rock 'n Roll All Nite* by KISS, and Metallica's *One*.



Meanwhile, EA and Harmonix's wildly over-the-top offering *Rock Band* is looking more than ready to trade licks for *Guitar Hero III*'s target market. Not only has EA managed to grab loads of master tracks, but they've somehow swung some sort of diabolical deal to provide entire album downloads. First up will be The Who's acclaimed *Who's Next*, while Nirvana's iconic *Nevermind* has just been confirmed as the second.

Other bedroom thrashers include Black Sabbath's *Paranoid*, Metallica's *Enter Sandman*, and The Strokes' *Reptilia*.

PETER MOORE PAID ENOUGH TO JOIN EA

ELECTRONIC ARTS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED the completion of its internal reorganization into four main labels as well as its executive team which will be managing each brand for the publisher. This comes in an attempt to maximize the production of EA's games and help it drive growth in the four autonomous labels: Games, Casual Entertainment, The Sims, and EA Sports. Frank Gibeau was announced as the President of the EA Games label, Kathy Vrabeck will be President of EA Casual Entertainment and Nancy Smith will be the President of The Sims.

Most surprisingly, the Corporate Vice President for Interactive Entertainment Business in Microsoft's Entertainment and Devices division, Peter Moore, was announced to take over as the President of the EA Sports brand.

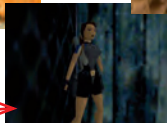
He is leaving his position at Microsoft for a cool \$1.5 million. Moore's annual base salary will be \$550,000 and his target bonus percentage will be 75% of that salary. He's been granted stock options as well. EA will also be paying Moore an estimated \$333,000 to help with relocation-related expenses as he moves his entire family to Northern California. David Gardner, executive vice president and chief operating officer of EA's worldwide studios, will be leaving the company.

THE EVOLUTION OF: LARA CROFT



Tomb Raider (1996)

Tomb Raider II (1997)



Tomb Raider III (1998)



Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness (2003)



Tomb Raider: Legend (2006)



Tomb Raider: Anniversary (2007)



FREE GAME OF THE MONTH



GHOSTBUSTERS RETRO REMAKE [On the DVD]

SUBMITTED TO THE 2006 Retro Remakes competition held on the Retro Remakes forum [www.retroremakes.com], Ghostbusters Retro Remake is a faithful rendition of the original 8-bit game that had many gamers enthralled. The Remake contains a complete graphical overhaul as well as some changed gameplay elements, the most noticeable of which being the driving parts - now there are cars to dodge and bonus money to collect. Hitting a car makes you lose cash, so you'll want to try for a clean run.

It's on the DVD, and it's free. Go on, spoil yourself.





MOVERS & SHAKERS

Crysis is either coming in September or November, depending on which EA press release you believe. The good news is that it will be here in this year still. • **A.S.T.A.L.K.E.R.** sequel has been announced, exclusively for the PC. Called **S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Clear Sky**, it will take place a year before the events of the first game. • Citizen Kabuto developer Planet Moon Studios is busy creating a Wii-trivia game called **Smarty Pants**. Wii meets Planet Moon meets Silly Trivia? Sign us up! • THQ has moved back the PS3 version of **Stuntman: Ignition** to October, but the other versions should be available around now. • More Crypto-action coming soon! Two more **Destroy All Humans!** games have been announced. **Big Willy** will head to current-gen platforms while next-gen beauty will embrace **Path of the Furon**. • Is it finally going to be released? After delays and a lot of speculation over its release date, Microsoft has finally declared that November is when you can buy Bioware's RPG **Mass Effect**. • Grant us a favour! During an EA stockholder's meeting, EA Games chief Frank Gibeau revealed that **The Godfather 2** is currently in development. • It's about time! Saint's Row developer Volition and THQ have announced that a new, next-generation **Red Faction** is being developed. Considering that this is the game to pioneer real destructive terrain in an FPS, you should be very eager to play it. • Argh! **Grand Theft Auto 4** won't be out this year! Rockstar has delayed the game to 2008. It makes us want to break something... • Test your movie knowledge on your 360: Microsoft

has announced **Scene it? Lights, Camera, Action**, a Buzz-style trivia game that will ship with four controllers and lots of movie questions. • During E3, everyone nearly missed the news that an **Advanced Wars** sequel is coming this year. **Advanced Wars Dual Strike 2** will follow up on the highly-rated DS game and is due in Europe by Q4. • Id's popular mobile RPG **Orcs & Elves** will be ported to the DS, according to the developer. A sequel for the game is also in the works for mobile phones. • A **LocoRoco** sequel has been announced by Sony, confirming a lot of speculation around it since a trophy was seen for the game at the E3 06 demonstration of Home. Called **Buu Buu Cocoreccho! by LocoRoco**, it will be released over the PlayStation Network. • No Sam Fisher this year. A financial report from Ubisoft revealed that **Splinter Cell: Conviction** has been pushed back to 2008. • The rumors are usually true. Both **Gears of War** and **Viva Piñata** will be ported to the PC under Microsoft's Games for Windows brand. Fortunately **Gears of War** will also support XP and DX9. • Sony has officially announced **Killzone 2**, and damn, does it look good! It will be out in 2008. Yes, seriously, what's taking so long? • Take Mario to the stars and beyond! Nintendo has announced the release date of **Super Mario Galaxy** as 12 November. **Super Smash Bros. Brawl** will be released in December. • The developer of **Sly Cooper**, Suckerpunch, has announced that it's working on a PS3 exclusive sandbox game called **Infamous**.

ECS ELITEGROUP
Simply Smart



Highway or No Way

ECS 3 series chipset motherboards with FSB 1333MHz takes you there faster, smoother and with more stability.



G31T-M



G31 + ICH7
The most popular
Motherboard with
Intel® 3 series chipsets

- Intel® Core™2 Quad / Core™2 Duo CPUs
- Supports up to FSB 1333 MHz
- Dual DDR2 800 Memory up to 4GB
- Integrated Intel® GMA 3100 Graphics
- 1 PCIe x16 Slot (@X16)
- SATAII 3Gb/s
- Build in 10/100 LAN
- Integrated High Definition Audio

945GCT-M2



945GC + ICH7
Excellent Digital
Display Expansibility

- Intel® Core™ 2 Duo CPUs
- FSB 1066/800 MHz
- Dual DDR2 667 memory
- Integrated Intel® GMA 950 Graphics
- Features 1 PCIe X16 Slot (@X16)
- Build-in 10/100 LAN (Giga LAN optional)
- SATAII 3Gb/s
- Integrated High Definition Audio



Konami has confirmed that the actors from the **Hellboy** movie will lend their voices to the game. Ron Perlman, Selma Blair and Doug Jones did the same for the animated movies.



Good news! Infinity Ward plans to hold a **Call of Duty 4** public beta on Live. Bad News! It will be for US gamers only.

Id Software has moved away from the PC as its lead platform, instead focusing on making console games. The PC isn't disappearing, but id's tradition of creating bleeding-edge games for PC hardware seems to be at an end.



The **South Park** episode that featured **World of Warcraft** got nominated for an Emmy. Sure, it was funny, but was it that good? Sounds a bit like the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences is a bit clueless when it comes to today's television culture.



Think you are a god at **Guitar Hero**? Step back, for an enterprising (or bored) engineer has created the Guitar Heronoid. This store-front dummy sports a brain that can pick up visual data from the PlayStation 2 version of the game and then instruct its two hands to play the song. That means it creams Freebird and Six on Expert.



WEIRD GAMING

NOT ALL GAMING NEWS has to do with new releases or some rumor we just love to flame. Sometimes there are pretty weird things as well:

Brazil's top **Gunbound** gamer thought he was going to get lucky when he arranged a date with a female admirer over the Internet. But instead he found himself on the wrong side of a pointing gun and a gang member, who forced him to hand over his top-scoring **Gunbound** account for sale on eBay. Luckily the police arrested the culprits, but it's not clear if the player got a date yet.



A sixteen-year old gamer in the UK bought a PlayStation 2 off eBay for just over a thousand rands, but when he got his package he found that the two games it was to come with weren't there. Instead, along with the console, he found £44,000 (R 640,000) in the box. Police are investigating, but if the owner can't be traced he might end up with the cash.

An airport in California was evacuated for 90 minutes and five aircraft were grounded when security agents saw something in a bag that looked suspiciously like a bomb, since it has electronics and wires. It ended up being a "handheld game board", in other words a PSP, GBA, DS or something like that. The terrorists must be trembling at such efficiency.



An 18-year old gamer was trying to teach his cousin a trick in **Mortal Kombat** on the SNES, holding his own controller in his mouth and his cousin's in his hands, when lightning struck him. The man recovered without any serious injuries or side-effects. Raiden was apparently not involved.



UT3 BECOMES PS3 EXCLUSIVE

XBOX 360 OWNERS WILL be letting loose joint sighs of frustration after reading the following sentence. Sony Playstation 3 has been given a timed exclusive of **Unreal Tournament 3**. There it has been said, but don't blame the messenger, it seems as though Microsoft is also at fault for this because while they want the game on their console as well, they were not willing to allow Epic's new idea of allowing the PC and console to swop mods to make it to theirs. This essentially means that owners of the PS3 will be able to interact with their PC counterparts and play user created mods on their PS3's. Epic states that the reason for this is that it increases the life of the game tremendously and it has always been like a holy grail of the console market. While UT3 will be a PS3 timed exclusive, it will also be released on the PC as well so that players can experience this feature.

ESRB ON A WITCH HUNT?

EARLY IN JUNE, 3D Realms received a rather strongly worded letter from the Entertainment Software Ratings Board, citing some thirty alleged infractions against the ESRB's Terms and Conditions Agreement on the developer's website. These were largely concerned with outdated ratings icons and lack of content descriptors (those "Blood" and "Nudity" warnings that mark the good stuff).

This comes in the wake of continued inaction from Take Two Interactive, following the ESRB's catastrophic "Adults Only" rating granted to **Manhunt 2**. Take Two chairman Strauss Zelnick has said only that, "Because this is a voluntary ratings organisation in the US, we have to be critical of ourselves if we've allowed a system to develop that prevents us from bringing a title to market that we want to bring to market. One does have to ask oneself, what is the purpose of a rating if it means effectively a title cannot be released?"



THE PSP SLIMS DOWN

AT E3 2007, SONY announced its new PSP, redesigned to address the frequent criticisms leveraged against the PSP such as loading times, weight as well as battery life. The "PSP Lite" will be 33% lighter than the original and features an improved battery without impeding on screen size or clarity. Sony claim between 8 to 10 hours of battery life. It will also be 19% slimmer and Sony claims they have reduced load times from UMD significantly due to additional RAM.

It will also include video output capabilities, letting you hook up a TV to watch movies or play games. The US price sits at an estimated \$199. No international pricing has been announced yet. The "PSP Lite" will reportedly arrive in white from the start with more colour variations to follow. To sweeten the deal, Sony has also been demonstrating a PSP TV tuner in Japan, though the rest of the world is unlikely to see that soon.

FREE MOD OF THE MONTH



COMMAND & CONQUER GENERALS:
ZERO HOUR - ALLSTARS
[On the DVD]

NOW THAT JOHN CARMACK (the programming legend behind **Doom** and such) has said that the "golden age of modding" is over, do you think we'll still see good mods for PC games? Thankfully, there are the stalwart modders out there who've not heard what Carmack said, and still make awesome stuff.

All Stars is a **C&C Generals** mod that "aims to settle the debates **C&C** fans have been having for over a decade: What unit is the best? Which storylines are best? Who would win, Apocalypse, Overlord or a Mammoth MKII? Is Tesla technology better than Tiberium weapons? Can the Generals build system stack up against the classic **C&C** style?"

The mod features tons of **All Star C&C** units and structures from the previous games to form the Tiberian Coalition and Red Alert Alliance. Tons of new upgrades for the classic **C&C** units and structures, the return of classic **C&C** superweapons like the Iron Curtain, Weather Storm, Ion Cannon, Temple of Nod Nuke, Hunter Seeker Drone, Psychic Dominator and more!

It also has an innovative build system for the Tiberian Coalition and Red Alert Alliance that recreates the classic Conyard based construction seen in past **C&Cs**, but brings it to the SAGE engine.

C&C fans, enjoy.



CONSOLE WATCH

"Code-name Falcon" involves Microsoft improving the Xbox 360's internal electronics to the **new cheaper 65-nanometer production process** from the current 90-nanometer process. • Sierra Online has announced three upcoming XBLA titles – **Switchball** (physics based puzzle game), **Commanders** (turn-based battle game) and **Battlestar Galactica**. • **Disney ABC** has agreed on a deal with Microsoft to bring its feature-films to US members of Xbox Live. • Sony is preparing **a high-definition movie and TV download service for the PS3** to rival that of Microsoft's offering. • Technology specialist from gadget magazine Stuff, Tom Dunmore, claims that downloading films via legitimate services such as **Microsoft's Xbox Live is threatening the future of DVD**. • A lawyer from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, has **sued Microsoft** on claims that the 360 causes "destructive scratches" to discs. A **second class action lawsuit** up to the tune of \$5 million has been filed in a California court against Microsoft for the 360 allegedly scratching discs. • Nintendo of America's Reggie Fils-Aime, told reporters recently that **95% of all Wii players are ages 6 to 24** and that Wii players are 66% male ages 25 to 49 and 33% female ages 25 to 49. • Nintendo introduced **Wii Fit at E3 2007**, a new fitness game that lets players step on a pressure-sensitive pad and perform various exercises. • Also unveiled: the **Wii Zapper**, a "lightgun" casing that houses the Wiimote and Nunchuk together to form a machine-gun style "gun" and will come bundled with demonstration software. • The upcoming 80GB PS3 **will not include the PS2 Emotion Engine** and will rely on software emulation to support PAL PS2 games. • SCEA president Jack Tretton has **blamed third-party developers for PS3 software deficiencies**, saying that Sony cannot control what third-parties do. • The Parallel Processing Corporation has **sued Sony over their Cell processor** claiming that it infringes on a patent approved to them in 1991. • Vice president for Epic Games told CVG that he **expects consoles to choke PC gaming for years** as developers and publishers are shying away from DirectX 10. • **PlayStation 2 units have been installed in prisons** for young offenders in the UK.

GAMING CHARTS

Look & Listen
DVD • CD • GAMES MP3 • ACCESSORIES

PLAYSTATION 3

- 1 The Darkness
- 2 Ninja Gaiden Sigma
- 3 Ghost Recon Advance Warfighter 2
- 4 Fantastic 4: Rise of the Silver Surfer
- 5 Resistance: Fall of Man

XBOX 360

- 1 SKATE
- 2 The Darkness
- 3 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08
- 4 Medal of Honor: Airborne
- 5 Colin McRae: DiRT

PLAYSTATION 2

- 1 Rugby 08
- 2 Stuntman: Ignition
- 3 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08
- 4 SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Combined Assault
- 5 Fantastic 4: Rise of the Silver Surfer

PC

- 1 Guild Wars Eye of the North
- 2 Rugby 08
- 3 Overlord
- 4 Medal of Honor: Airborne
- 5 The Sims 2 Bon Voyage

PSP

- 1 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08
- 2 Ghost Recon Advance Warfighter 2
- 3 SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo 2
- 4 Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories
- 5 Guilty Gear Judgment

GfK June figures provided by GfK
www.gfksa.co.za

PLAYSTATION 3

- 1 Spider-Man 3
- 2 Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End
- 3 Need for Speed: Carbon
- 4 Motorstorm
- 5 Resistance: Fall of Man

XBOX 360

- 1 Forza Motorsport 2
- 2 Pro Evolution Soccer 6
- 3 Gears of War
- 4 Fight Night Round 3
- 5 Project Gotham Racing 3

PLAYSTATION 2

- 1 God of War II
- 2 FIFA 2007
- 3 Need for Speed: Carbon
- 4 Gran Turismo 4
- 5 Gran Turismo 4 Platinum

PC

- 1 Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars
- 2 Tomb Raider: Anniversary
- 3 LOTR: Battle for Middle Earth
- 4 Assorted sold-out titles
- 5 The Sims 2 Seasons

PSP

- 1 Assorted R99 budget titles
- 2 FIFA 2007
- 3 Need for Speed: Carbon
- 4 Killzone: Liberation
- 5 Tekken: Dark Resurrection

FOXCONN[®]

www.foxconnchannel.com



P35A-S

- Supports Intel® Core™2 Quad, Core™2 Extreme, Core™2 Duo Processors with 1333/1066/800MHz FSB
- ATI CrossFire™ & Foxconn Multi-Graphics support
- 100% SOLID Capacitor design with Foxconn Sustainable Engineering
- Intel® Matrix Storage Technology and Rapid Recover Technology
- Gigabit LAN, 7.1 Channel HD Audio
- 6" SATAII, eSATAII, 2" IEEE1394, 10" USB2.0

SAHARA
THE ULTIMATE IN PCs

For more information,
please contact our distributor:
Sahara Computers, tel. +27 11 542 1000
Midrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
89 Gazelle Ave, Corporate Park, Old Pretoria Main Road,

VISIT FOXCONN @ GITEX

U.A.E., Dubai, September 9th-12th
NOVOTEL World Trade Center, Blue Bar from 10 a.m and beyond

THE NUMBERS

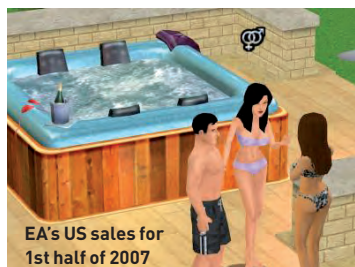
It's that time of the year when we all learn who made how much dough! Here are some of the winners and losers:

\$397.8 million



Activision's US sales for 1st half of 2007

\$365.7 million



EA's US sales for 1st half of 2007

\$1.89 billion



Microsoft's entertainment division loss after extending the 360 warranty by a year

\$245.9 million



Sony's Game division loss due to slow PS3 sales

\$1.4 billion

Nintendo's net profit for its 2007 financial year



CAPTION OF THE MONTH

Every month we'll choose a boring, odd or peculiar screenshot from any random game and write a bad caption for it. Your job is to come up with a better [funny] caption. The winner will get a free game from Vivendi Universal Games. Send your captions to ed@nag.co.za with the subject [September Caption].



SEPTEMBER CONTEST

NAG'S LAME

ATTEMPT:
"I see your Schwartz is as big as mine!"



AUGUST WINNER

"If you go into the woods today
You better stand well clear,
'Cause Colin Mcrae
Will wreck your day,
And bust you up
The GTA way"
Dave Loubser

RULES: (1) If you don't use the correct subject line, your mail will be automatically filtered by our spam software and deleted. (2) If you think sending in 20 captions for the same screenshot is how you want to play the system, then put them all in the same mail or we'll keep the top one and delete the rest. You probably won't win anyway because you can't follow simple instructions. And people who can't follow simple instructions don't deserve to win things. (3) Obey all posted speed limits. (4) Never run with scissors. (5) There is no spoon. (6) Don't tell me what I can't do!

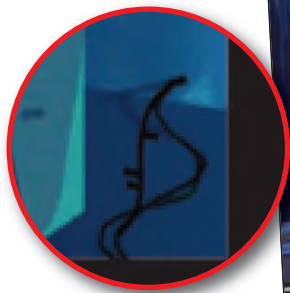
vivendi GAMES

WE NEED A HERO

Every month, in honour of our new favourite TV show, *Heroes*, we'll hide the mysterious mark of the heroes somewhere in the magazine. It could be in a screenshot, on a piece of hardware or anywhere, really. Find it and send an e-mail to ed@nag.co.za with the subject line [Heroes September]. We'll announce a random winner next month and that person will win a fabulous prize from our new sponsor, Megarom! See details at the top of the page. And remember: Save the cheerleader, save the world!

LAST MONTH'S WINNER

No name provided.
Can Mr. 078 *** 8268
please call us... (p. 98)



CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER RELEASES

Subject to change

DAY	GAME	PLATFORM
1	Crackdown [Xbox 360 Classics]	360
1	Viva Pinata [Xbox 360 Classics]	360
1	Ratatouille	PC
1	Juiced 2	PC
4	Medal of Honor: Airborne	360, PC
4	The Sims 2: Bon Voyage Expansion Pack	PC
7	MotoGP '07	360
12	Ratatouille	360
18	Skate	360
	Pre-order and stand a chance to win a Volcom deck!	
21	Blazing Angels 2: Secret Missions of WWII	PS3
21	Guitar Hero: Rock the 80s Expansion	PS2
21	CSI: 3 Dimensions of Murder	PS2
21	Juiced 2	360
24	Bioshock	360
25	FIFA 08	Multi
26	Clive Barker's Jericho	360
26	Halo 3	360
26	Halo 3 Limited Edition	360
26	Halo 3 Legendary Edition Includes collectible Spartan Mjolnir Mark VI helmet case	360
28	Enemy Territory: Quake Wars + Pre-Order Bonus (Bonus item with every pre-order, while stocks last)	PC
28	Enemy Territory: Quake Wars Collector's Edition + Pre-Order Bonus (Bonus item with every pre-order, while stocks last)	PC
28	Sega Rally	Multi
TBA	Ape Escape 2	PSP
TBA	Backsite: Area 51	360
TBA	Bioshock	PC
TBA	Backsite: Area 51	PS3, PC
TBA	Brunswick Pro Bowling	PS2
TBA	Castelvania: The Dracula X Chronicles	PSP
TBA	Coded Arms 2: Contagion	PSP
TBA	CSI: Hard Evidence	PC
TBA	Emergency Mayhem	PS2, PSP
TBA	Heavenly Sword	PS3
TBA	Impossible Mission	PS2, PSP
TBA	John Woo presents Stranglehold	Multi
TBA	Monster Hunter Freedom 2	PSP
TBA	Obscure 2	PS2, PC
TBA	Practical IQ	PSP
TBA	Ratatouille	Multi
TBA	Rogue Galaxy	PS2
TBA	Silverfall	PSP
TBA	SingStar Next Generation	PS3
TBA	SingStar Rock Ballads	PS2
TBA	SingStar Rock Ballads with 2 Mics	PS2
TBA	Snow X Racing	PS2
TBA	UFO Trilogy	PC
TBA	Unreal Tournament 2007	PC
TBA	Warhammer 40K: Tactics	PSP
TBA	Warhawk	PS3
TBA	Wipeout Pulse	PSP
TBA	World Championship Poker 3	PS2, PSP

HALO

MASTER CHIEF RETURNS
ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2007

STANDARD EDITION
ONLY
R499.95

ONLY ON
XBOX 360



		<div>NAG FUN FACT A keyboard and mouse is better for cooking, but a dual-analog controller is better at doing tax returns.</div> 		<p>1/2</p> <p>EVENT: Netrats Monthly Pretoria (www.langames.co.za)</p> <p>HISTORY: 1939: Germany invades Poland, then proceeds to wonder what the hell it's doing there in the first place. At least it got Britain and France to start thinking about declaring war on Germany.</p>	
<p>10</p>	<p>11</p> <p>HISTORY: 2001: The United States reel in shock as thousands are left dead and the World Trade Center is destroyed.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>HISTORY: 2001: The United States declares war on terror. It spends the next six years being scare of its own shadow.</p>		<p>14</p> <p>EVENT: Organised Chaos Cape Town (www.langames.co.za)</p>	<p>15/16</p> <p>EVENT: Mayhem Boksburg (www.langames.co.za)</p>
	<p>18</p> <p>HISTORY: 1970: Rock legend Jimi Hendrix dies after collapsing at a party in London. Groove on in space, dude.</p>	<p>19</p> 		<p>21</p> <p>EVENT: L.A.N.ing SuX Pretoria (www.langames.co.za)</p> <p>EVENT: SCIORP LAN Cape Town (www.langames.co.za)</p>	<p>22/23</p> <p>EVENT: Liberty Benoni (www.langames.co.za)</p>
<p>24</p> <p>HISTORY: 2979: The Space Pope John Paul MCXIII calls on the people of Ireland to end all violence and return to "the ways of peace".</p>				<p>28</p> <p>ZOMG: RAGE IS HERE! RAGE IS NOW! (www.rageexpo.co.za) 1500 NAG LAN! Seriously, tickets are selling out! Better get some fast.</p>	<p>29/30</p> 

LIMITED EDITION*
ONLY
R588.56



LEGENDARY EDITION*
ONLY R757.76



LIMITED STOCK AVAILABLE

kalahari.net
PC | PS2 | PS3 | XBOX 360

Q&A: PSYCHIC SOFTWARE & DARKWIND: WAR ON WHEELS

For a game that is only 80MB in size and free to play (although subscribers get access to the more detailed functionality), Darkwind proves you can't judge a game only by its screenshots. It was through fortuitous happenstance that we stumbled across Darkwind and its vibrant, enthusiastic community that, going against practically everything that is considered the norm these days when it comes to online communities, actually has the time and patience to welcome new players and show them the ropes. The screenshots of the game may not look like much, but that is what makes this game such a diamond in the rough - what you don't see.

After a few grueling hours of explosive repercussions combined with pinpoint tactical turn-based vehicular mayhem on the deathtrack, we caught up with Sam Redfern, the main man behind Psychic Software and Darkwind, to ask him a few questions.

51



Orders Phase
✓ Move Sent

Laser fired from Annette Jackman's vehicle
'Grease Monkey' Efrain Wright(Fish Heads): last turn here toe
Benito Ratzlaff(Clarinbridge Crushers): the new viper skins are nice aren't they?
Vehicle Messages Disabled

Animal Farm
Clarinbridge C
Toecutters
Gearjammers
Fish Heads
Death By Tire

Lobby

Event

Team

25% DISCOUNT ON SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR NAG READERS!

Sam gracefully provided NAG with its very own discount for those interested in checking out Darkwind. If you enter 'NAG2007' as the promotion code while signing up, you'll receive a 25% discount on your subscription. The offer is valid until the end of September 2007.

One of the biggest problems with MMOs is the "what do I do now?" syndrome.

First off, the obligatory introduction question: who are you, and how did you get to where you are now?

Psychic Software is an indie games company in the west of Ireland, and has been making games since 1994. I actually set it up as a platform for all of my software development work, but games were always the main driving force. In fact, game making has always been my passion – from when I was only about 6 years old I was making crazy boardgames with complex rules, and dice, and little paper counters. From that point it was a natural step to start making computer games, which I started when I was 11, on an Apple II and then a BBC Micro. I had a 2D Elite-like game ('Space Trader') published in Personal Computer World Magazine in 1984, at the age of 13. Most of the games I wrote during the 1980s were passed around and played by friends and friend-of-friends – they were all detailed simulations or wargames of one sort or another, and they kept people entertained for weeks. A little more recently, 'Critical Hit' (1995) was one of our most successful projects, and was the game for which Psychic Software was actually set up. This was written for the Amiga and distributed on the fledgling Internet – at the time mostly FTP sites and the like.

Tell us a bit more about *Darkwind*, what it is and what your hopes for the game are?

Darkwind: War on Wheels is a persistent, 3D massively multiplayer wargame set in the near future, which combines the depth of detail inherent in turn-based games, with long-term strategic elements that keep the challenge going for months/years. The game is staged on a sparsely populated continent, one of the few surviving areas of civilisation following the 'solar apocalypse' triggered by a temporary failure of the earth's protective magnetosphere. The focus of the game is on vehicular combat – cars with guns – both in the wilderness and in man-made arenas and racing circuits. As well as competitive leagues and ladders, the game also has a detailed trade model, a dynamic economy and a host of AI gangs of pirates, traders and racers who compete alongside the human players.

The strategic elements of the game are controlled via a web browser, while the individual races and combats are conducted using a game client, which is available for Windows and Mac OSX (with Linux coming soon).

Darkwind is fostering an enthusiastic community of players. Our hope is that the game grows, but that it does so without losing its fantastic social side. We don't expect to be the next World of Warcraft (nor would we want to be) but we do have an extremely scalable model for both technology and gameplay. It is critical that the game balance remains as the player base grows, and we have spent a lot of time designing the game's economy and long-term strategy to ensure this.

***Darkwind* is very much a dark horse MMO that seems to have no problems running its own race, doing its own thing. It fills a very untapped niche with its theme and actual game mechanics. What inspired the development of *Darkwind*, in terms of undertaking such a massive project [since MMOs are hardly the easiest game type to develop]?**

It is certainly a big commitment, and perhaps goes against the accepted wisdom of what is possible for a small development company to produce. But *Darkwind* goes against many of the norms of current MMOs, so we don't have a problem with that. I would describe *Darkwind* as an MMO Wargame or an MMO Boardgame, or even an MMO Sports game – rather than an MMORPG: what keeps it playable for an

extended period is not the huge amount of custom content, but the fact that you're operating in a complex and challenging simulated world. It's in the tradition of *Elite*, and perhaps more strikingly *Civilization*, which succeeded in being an epic and extremely replayable game on the strength of its simulation and not on its amount of graphical content.

Darkwind provides a complex economy, for example, based on systems dynamic simulation, which is directly impacted by resource creation, geography, on-the-road piracy and supply and demand. This is possible because we run many aspects of the game to a real-world time scale. It takes hours to travel between towns; it takes hours to upgrade your cars; it takes days or even weeks to heal injured characters, and the economy itself tends to run to long-term cycles as the simulated successes and failures of the world's NPC traders and pirates are calculated. Players need to think and plan, and the consequences of their decisions impact them for weeks into the future.

Another major part to the game is the racing, arena combat and deathracing leagues. This was designed as an important part since it provides a continuing challenge and a 'safe' platform for PvP. Sports games don't need huge amounts of custom content, because the enjoyment is in mastering the simulation and improving your skills, not in exploring and taking in the new eye candy.

As an indie, you pick your battles. We don't have the resources to make a massively detailed graphical world or to continually produce new content and quests for our players. But we don't need to, because the game remains challenging on its own merits.

One of the biggest problems with MMOs is the "what do I do now?" syndrome, when you realise that your actions are ultimately meaningless to the game world and there isn't much to do other than grind up your skills. The design of *Darkwind* is in many ways a direct attempt to avoid this situation.

Automotive combat set in a seemingly post-apocalyptic theme is a very under-represented motif in gaming these days, despite the strong inspirational material put forth by the *Mad Max* movies and the original *Car Wars* board-game from the early 1980s. How much of *Darkwind* was inspired by these sources or other sources?

We would certainly see both *Car Wars* and *Mad Max* as major inspirations. Many of our most enthusiastic players are actually ex-*Car Wars* fanatics. Another source would be Judge Dredd's 'Cursed Earth' which portrays a very dark but also a humorous picture of a post-apocalyptic future, colourful mutants with comical personalities abound.

At a first glance, it's surprising that fantasy MMOs continue to dominate to such a great extent. One reason of course is the unwillingness of big business to take the risk of treading new ground. But there's other reasons too: for example the physics underlying a car game are very CPU intensive, which makes it very hard to do well in an MMO environment, as well as very greedy on server CPU cycles. These are good technical and economic reasons for rehashing fantasy MMOs.

But perhaps it's more fundamental than that. Popular artforms tend to follow a well-defined cycle. They go through a pulp period where everything



is predictable and utterly derivative – the industry producing them is unwilling or unable to think outside the box. In literature, we had pulp fiction and gothic novels of the late 19th Century – but eventually modern literature emerged from them. In cinema, we had the 'B' movies and pulp horrors of the 1950s – again, what followed this was an industry that was much more able to innovate. In pop music, the early bands – even the rock 'n roll greats of the 1950s – primarily published cover versions in very formulaic styles. I would argue (or hope) that computer games are currently in their pulp period, and that better things are to come!

The unique turn-based racing lets players pull off rather impressive manoeuvres around the track. Why did you decide to go turn-based, aside from the obvious benefits in terms of lag tolerance?

The main reason for making the game turn-based was because such a tactically detailed game could simply not be played in real-time. You need to be able to control multiple vehicles, each with multiple characters and guns in. You also need to manage other factors such as character psychology and stress levels. We could have made an RTS-style game of course, but (and it may be just a personal opinion) the real-time nature of these tends to detract from the real strategy and certainly causes a loss of fine control over your individual combat units. Many RTS games test little more than who has the best and fastest mouse control.

There are also a number of other benefits to the game being turn-based.

Turn based racing may sound strange (unless you're aware of the long history of car racing board games, which goes back at least to the 1960s) – but it really does work. We provide each car with a 'ghost', which shows its predicted position after one move; the ghost updates as you turn the wheel and decide on your move, and the accuracy of the ghost's prediction is related to the driving skill of the character you're playing. The ghost allows players to control their car far better than they could in real-time – after all, few of us are actually professional racing drivers – and means that (unlike real-time racing games) you tend to have a genuine tactical battle rather than just seeing who is first to make some dumb mistake. *Darkwind* is the only turn-based car game that we know of with accurate physics.

A turn-based game tends to be much more sociable – like a boardgame – and this was our precise intention. You have time to chat, smack-talk and even just watch each other's moves as well as your own. The game is, as you state, naturally also very lag tolerant (and bandwidth friendly) – but also the server calls pre-emptive timeouts for you if your connection drops, so you can often recover fully from what would in most games be catastrophic.

The turn-based nature of the game also gives resource usage and performance benefits. The load on our game servers is much less, since they're only simulating one second of movement every 20 or 30 real-world seconds. It also means that the computers owned by the game players are freed from doing any physics simulation whatsoever – something that is impossible in a real-time car game where client-side prediction is required to fill in the gaps in the network packets – and therefore we can support quite modest hardware.

Once someone has signed up for *Darkwind*, they receive emails from in-game characters (that provide hints and advice) over the space of a few weeks. This is quite a unique and very personal feature that really adds a layer of charm to the game. What inspired the idea?

The main thinking behind this is that we're aware that you need to be creative in your method of getting information to people nowadays. If you feed them nuggets of useful information over a period of time, and in a way that takes no effort on their part, you're much more likely to get them to read it. It's also a



good way of filling out the background story and roleplaying atmosphere of the game. Furthermore, we're attempting to create a blurring of the boundaries between the real world and the game world – this is something that you really can do in a game that's tied to a real-world time scale. The fact that you are forced to wait for your vehicles to get fixed up before setting off on that big trade convoy mission means that you consider and agonise over your decisions while going about your everyday life – sitting in traffic or whatever becomes much less boring. The emails from in-game characters are part of that.

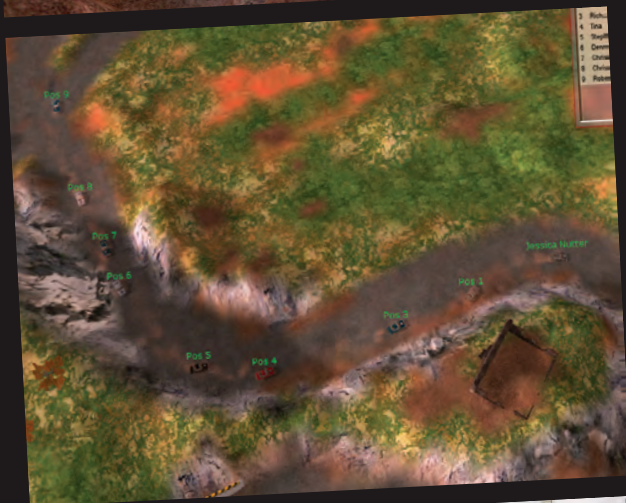
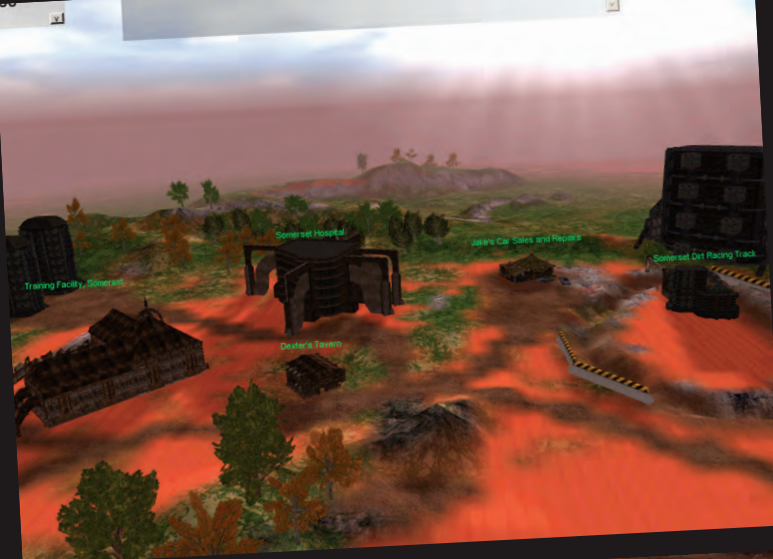
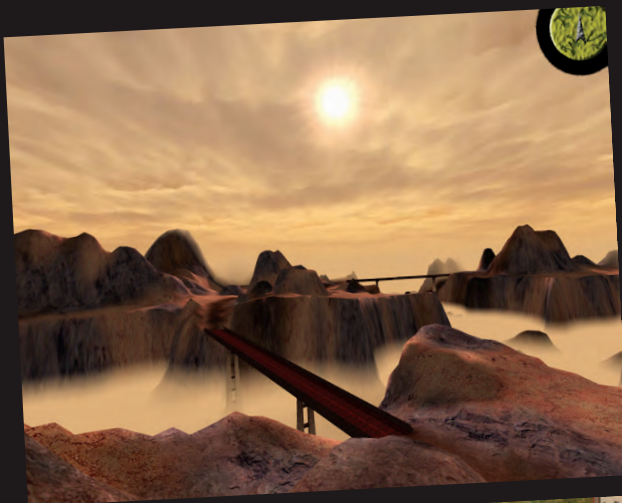
How has the community support for *Darkwind* been, have you seen many subscribers and people just checking the game out?

Most visitors to the game fall into one of two types: firstly, those that either don't 'get it', or perhaps don't have the patience to see beyond the lack of AAA graphics; and secondly, those that get hooked

on the complexity, challenge and attention to detail. It's probably the simple difference between being a wargamer and being an FPS player: these types of games are simply very different and are basically a matter of taste. The community is really good though – partially due to the relaxed nature of a turn-based game, and partially because of the type of person that is attracted to this type of game. You need some patience to learn the details in order to be good enough to play competitively, and this tends to mean our players are patient and mature.

What are your plans for *Darkwind* over the next few years, will there perhaps be a *Darkwind 2* or other MMO project in the future?

We have new features planned for the next 18 months or more – for example player-owned factories and camps, which will push more of the economy away from an abstract simulation and towards direct player control, as well as being the basis for long-term factions and



SAM REDFERN

In addition to being a games programmer and head-honcho behind *Psychic Software*, Sam Redfern also lectures programming and graphics at the National University of Ireland in Galway. His academic research is in the area of "Collaborative Virtual Environments", which is essentially the use of game technologies to support the work of distributed teams.

1995's *Nutter*

Massive damage to engine
Damage to front mounted weapons
Damage to front armour

warfare. We're also going to have characters on foot within the next 3 months or so. In technical terms, the event-based (or skirmish-based) model of *Darkwind* is inherently very scalable so we're ready to plug in new servers, as they are required. Beyond 18 months, we have several ideas under consideration, but no firm decisions have yet been made on these.

What would you consider the most important lessons you've learned while developing *Darkwind*?

You've learned a little about developing Darkwatch. We have learned that the incremental adding of new features while taking strong community input is a great way to develop a game like this. There is so much gaming experience and so many great ideas in the community that it would be silly to ignore it and think that we knew it all. For example, our original model for the racing and combat leagues was very different to how it is now – and it didn't work well in terms of playability. It's not an easy thing to do, but we basically unravelled several months of work and rebuilt the

entire league system late last year, following extensive discussions with our alpha-test players. In this particular case, we had little choice but to design the original league mechanics ourselves, since *Darkwind* didn't exist as a game without them. There's no way we would consider developing any major feature in the future without substantial community input.

Do you find it hard to gain exposure for *Darkwind* in this current booming MMO market that seems to be heading for a massive explosion of titles over the next few years?

Yes. Unfortunately, many game players today don't have much patience and aren't willing to even try a game if the graphics aren't cutting edge; this seems to be especially true in the MMO market. But we are seeing a good growth of the game as a niche offering. *Darkwind* tends to be played by a different type of person to one that would play traditional MMOs. We're exploring alternative directions for getting exposure,

for example the wargaming sector. For the moment though, we're content to grow organically. It certainly keeps things simpler in terms of technology and also game dynamics, and it works for us since our costs are low.

Where does the name Psychic Software stem from?

You were probably hoping for some funny anecdote here! Actually, I just liked the sound of it. It is an alliteration with a silent P. A wordplay, perhaps. Luckily our bank is very understanding though, since the majority of cheques we receive have the company name mis-spelt!

Thank you so much for taking the time to answer these questions, and best of luck with *Darkwind* and future projects!

Thanks yourself! If I had known who you were on that figure-8 racetrack I might have kept my finger off the trigger of the machine gun :-)

NAG



MIKTAR'S MEANDERINGS

by Miktar Dracon

WHY NINTENDO IS THE BEST

(or: How I learned to stop worrying and love the bomb)

IN THIS MONTH'S COLUMN I'm going to be running a detailed and enthusiastic look at why Nintendo is the Best at making games and why their games are the Best ever and nobody else comes close or ever will. It's going to be a long, big-worded article that is sure to appeal to all those Nintendo fans out there. I will also be talking only about Mario games, specifically those made for ages 3 and up to about 10.

Are you still reading? Okay, good. If you're still here, it means that you've either seen through my clever ruse or you really are interested in that kind of stuff. Either way, you're here and I need to tell you something. You see, the title of this column is a lie, a trick I'm trying so as to hide the true intent of my column this month. I'm hiding the real content of my column, because I want to talk about something that's a bit tricky, a subject that many people refuse to examine with actual honesty because they either don't want to look bad, or don't want to be seen as advocating it.

I'm referring to Piracy (shhh, no so loud), the act of stealing copyrighted material instead of shelling out hard cash for it. Recently, I started to reexamine my own thoughts on piracy and I realized that I feel like a hypocrite. Since I started working for NAG, I've become very aware of the impact piracy has on the individuals inside the distributors that pay the big monies they do to secure the rights to bring in a certain range of titles, as well as the money they spend shipping those titles into our country. Real people are impacted by local piracy, people I know and who I like, so I don't like to see them worry about poor sales of a game due to piracy.

As a result, on the forums, in the IRC channel and other places where I represent NAG I make sure to always rebut anyone who mentions piracy in a positive light, or admits to having pirated themselves. This left me feeling like a full-fledged hypocrite for a few reasons.

Firstly, when I was a young gamer, still suffering under the parental units and not having my own income as well as struggling with school, I pirated games. As a writer for the most prominent gaming magazine in the country, admitting this feels like admitting to my own children (if I had any) that I did drugs in High-School, and that they should never do drugs. It is, in truth, entirely unfair of me to lambaste the young'uns who are pirating games. Said young'uns often say they do it because they simply cannot afford the games they want - the same excuse I once used.

After some lengthy discussion on the subject, I was given what I believe to be some useful advice - that perhaps piracy isn't a black-and-white issue and that there may be much more to it. As most pirates know, when a Warez group releases a game for people to pirate they always sternly remind people, "If you like the game, please buy it". It was those exact words that eventually led me to where I am now - an adult, buying as many games as I can afford (which compared to a young'un, is quite a lot). People *like stuff*, but more importantly, people *like to own stuff*. DVD sales are, I believe, a good indicator of this.

What I've come to realize, is that piracy is possibly the single most important word-of-mouth element in advertising games and growing the gaming market. I might be lynched by several factions for even suggesting it: but I believe piracy is needed if gaming is to survive.

The problem is, I am essentially trying to support the idea of responsible theft - something that is near-impossible to explain to the people who stand to lose money from piracy. Based on my own experience, piracy is the number one reason that South Africa even has a gaming industry right now. The PlayStation 2, I believe wholeheartedly, owes its local success entirely due to the flea-markets selling pirate PS2 games and the mod-chips that run them.

It requires you to believe in people, but I've come to realize that you get several types of pirates, some more useful to the industry than others - but the trick is the **majority** of pirates are *still good people* who, once they are financially more secure, would prefer to own stuff rather than dick around with pirating and cracking and hassling with updates... People who, after having gotten faith in certain game developers that they'll deliver on the goods thanks to being able to check out games via piracy since games are not cheap and demos are often carefully constructed advertisements or lies, will buy their own games.

That specific majority of pirates are important, but it doesn't condone selling pirate copies of games to make money - it may be a bit hippy, but don't copy that floppy if you're going to sell it - copy that floppy to see if it's something you want to support with your money. It's what is expected of adults. I believe in you. **NAG**

Yes!
Big floater in stall 2!







"Only a few more laps to go and then the action will begin, unless this is the action, which it is."

THE DOMAIN OF THE BASILISK

by Anton Lines

C. G. YES.

THE CHAMPIONSHIP GAMING SERIES has been creating quite a stir lately. North America's first regular season wrapped up at the end of July (read about it in this month's Multiplayer news), and chapter one is now closed on the most ambitious e-sports project ever attempted. Before the CGS, live gaming on television was a complete non-sequitur, at least outside of Asia. But a month and a half of astonishing production later, we find ourselves sitting back and thinking, "My god, this actually just happened." Yes, e-sports has been broadcast live. Yes, players are earning starting salaries of \$30,000 per annum. No, ladies and gentlemen, we are not dreaming.

As one might expect, the CGS has also attracted its share of criticism – most of it pretty scathing. The choice of games, especially that of *Counter-Strike: Source* over its more popular predecessor, and the made-for-TV rules that many consider random and skill-less, have been the main points of contention. Obviously the CGS has some sky-high expectations to live up to, but for many people the idea crashed before even taking off. Personally, I think they deserve to be given a chance for the attempt alone, and all things considered they're doing a solid job. Let's take a look at the biggest pros and cons.

Most important by far is the spectator experience. This is television, after all, and if the CGS is going to be sustainable it needs to attract the viewers. In this regard it is impossible to overstate the contribution of Paul "Redeye" Chaloner – gaming's own Murray Walker – who has single-handedly made *Project Gotham Racing 3* and *FIFA '07* exciting to watch. Before now I would never have believed this to be possible, but I find myself tuning in to every broadcast just to listen to his riveting commentary. This man could turn hopscotch into a spectator sport. And he should be getting even more of the mic time, because, sadly, the remaining members of the commentary team are just not on the same level. Marcus "DJWheat" Graham has the most distinguished shoutcasting career in the US, but he is often awkward on TV and has made a large number of glaring (unfortunately not humorous) errors. Johnathan "Fatal1ty" Wendel is the most recognisable personality in western e-sports, but he mumbles his words and never stops talking about himself.

That being said, both Fatal1ty and DJWheat are invaluable as advisors, and this is something the CGS got very right. Instead of trying to create the league from scratch, they put together a team

of experienced community leaders and tried hard to build on past successes. Craig "Torbull" Levine, ex-manager of *Counter-Strike* icons Team 3D, and Scott Valencia, formerly of the Cyberathlete Professional League, are in charge of operations. The six general managers are all at the top of their various fields. Regardless of a few small problems cropping up here and there, we know this league is in good hands.

I am thrilled to see that the producers are willing to learn from broadcast to broadcast. My biggest criticism of all e-sports coverage to date has been the absence of scoreboard overlays, but by week two the CGS had devised displays that were clear, professional and engaging. I still think the directors don't show enough of the action from first-person viewpoints, but I appreciate that the non-gaming public may find this perspective disorientating and need to be introduced to it gradually.

The major remaining criticisms are, to be honest, rather trivial. For the most part I don't like the game choices either, but everyone needs to bear in mind that this is first-and-foremost an introduction to e-sports for the masses. As I predicted, *Dead or Alive 4* has been a resounding success, and people are actually watching and understanding a team-based first-person shooter – on American television! The controversial rules have been drawn up in the same mode. Yes, we all agree that a one-round overtime in *Counter-Strike* is a little ridiculous, but it's also dramatic, and we need the drama to sell.

If the CGS is successful, it will usher in a golden era of competitive gaming that the western world could hardly have imagined. Remember the people involved. Fatal1ty is already pushing for *Quake* or *Unreal Tournament*. Redeye, DJWheat, Torbull, Jason Lake, Dave Geffon, Brian Flander, Mark Dolven – these are commentators, players and managers from the games we know and love. The league's producers have clearly shown they are willing to listen to their audience, and improvements continue to be made on an almost daily basis. It takes a remarkable lack of vision not to be excited about this. **NAG**

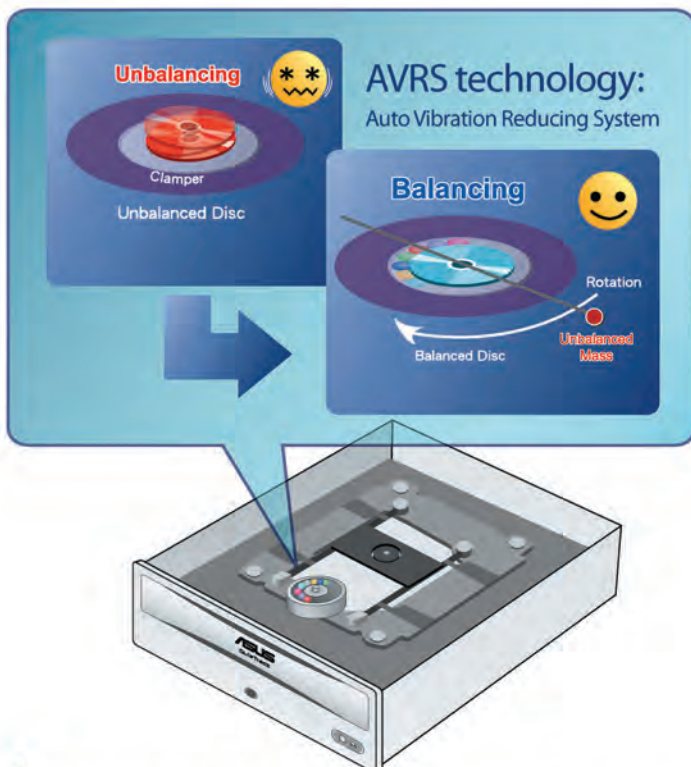
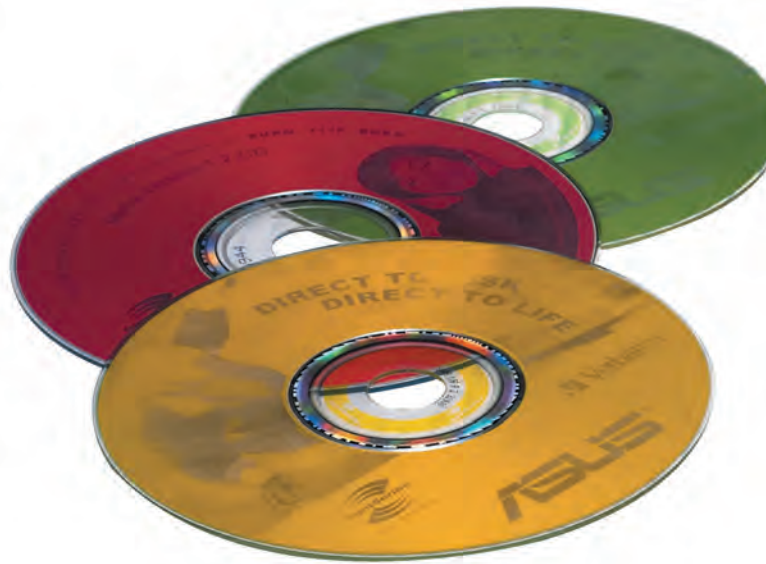
Match videos are uploaded to the Championship Gaming Series website each morning following a broadcast – www.thecgs.com (currently, only the North American division is active).



True 20X DVD±R Write Speeds

ASUS DRW-2014 L1T Internal LightScribe DVD Rewriter

Bored waiting for your DVD disks to finish burning? Well, ASUS has come up with a solution. The new ASUS DRW-2014 L1T internal DVD rewriter with LightScribe technology can make burning DVDs a breeze. Together with a high speed SATA interface, you can expect to enjoy five times faster data transfer rates than the current DMA33 standards.



Fast Data Speeds and Creative Disc Labelling

Boasting an exceedingly fast speed of 20X for writing DVD ROMs, the DRW-2014 L1T also has LightScribe technology to provide you with customized disc labelling. After the data has been burnt onto the LightScribe disc, you only have to flip the disc over to write the graphic and text on the label side and voila, simple professional-grade labels in no time.

QuietTrack - Quiet and Stable

The innovative ASUS exclusive QuietTrack technology dampens drive noise in every conceivable fashion while improving stability for quiet operations.

Auto Vibration Reducing System (AVRS)

The AVRS technology is designed to minimize the vibration caused by the spindle motor and resonance between components as well as the drive and PC cases. AVRS is designed to reduce vibration and noise induced by unbalanced mass of rotating machinery.



DAMMIT
by Megan Hughes

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE

THERE HAS BEEN A great deal of talk on the NAG forums of late around the topic of the general disillusionment that readers have felt. Too many times gamers have been caught up in the hype of the latest and greatest game (according to the developers, publishers and promoters) only to have their hopes dashed by a buggy or otherwise pathetic excuse for a game.

Often it has little to do with the graphics or the use of this or that physics engine. Let me just state at this point, for your information and understanding, that I actually have little understanding of what goes on behind the scenes of any game. After three years of Computer Studies in high school, a subject I happened to pass with flying colours (a fact which still baffles me), I still do not really understand the internal workings of any computer; let alone the meaning of all the big words that the developers use.

What I do know, however, is what it is to be a gamer. There are some fundamental qualities that are characteristic to all gamers, of whatever age, breed or genre. I do not think there is any specific person who is born a gamer, because to become one you must choose it. And it is in choosing that label that you separate yourself from those who do not choose it.

And what all gamers have in common is that moment of choice. We have all felt a particular feeling of curiosity mixed with excitement, fascination and pure bliss that happen the moment

we find that one game that gets us hooked. Of course, the game is different for everyone, but the feeling is the same. The addiction also shows itself in the same way in all gamers: we want more, and we want more right now.

The problem is, naturally, that we all experience what psychologists' term 'habituation.' Basically we get used to this sort of experience and so each time we are exposed to it our reaction reduces a little bit. Over time it becomes more and more difficult to even conjure up the memory (and all the fantastic feelings associated with it) of that first moment again.

And then we get caught up in a hype that lets us down. Suddenly it seems like gaming has lost its glow and the future is looking about as bright and clear as the Johannesburg city air. It is almost as if someone has stolen the light at the end of the tunnel.

We have all been there. Some have even gone to the edge and faced the darkness that says, 'Time to put down the controller, step away from the keyboard and start living in the real world; Gaming is just not all it was cracked up to be.'

Of course, this is far from the truth but the mind has a funny way of interpreting reality. Gaming as a culture and the actual gaming products are improving with stunning speed and we can only count ourselves lucky to have discovered this rollercoaster ride in time to get a front row seat.

And yet, for so many, that miserable feeling lingers. Every new release is sneered at and examined with an, all too critical, eye. No previews, reviews or demos lighten the soul and some dark sarcasm is added into every forum post.

There is hope, however. The solution to this plaguing problem is far simpler than one would expect. It does not take a fantastic game or a brand new leap for technology to bring these individuals back into the glow of the omnipresent screen (though it doesn't hurt of course).

All it takes is a choice. It is the same choice each of us made to become a gamer. Anyone feeling disillusioned and without hope must simply choose the gamer path. Know that there is a game out there, somewhere, that will bring that excitement and addiction all rushing back. Let your inner child or the part of you that wants to play games all day choose to look forward to that game, whatever it turns out to be.

Anticipation is half the joy anyway. And, besides, do you really want to live in the real world? **NAG**





RAMJET
by Walt Pretorius

INTERNET IN THE BACKWATERS

I HAVE RANTED AND COMPLAINED about a great many things over the years that I have written this column... the brief respite that happened a few months ago did nothing to calm me down. In fact, it probably made me angrier. Writing a column like this, see, is cathartic. It purges all those bad vibes, gets them out and makes me calm. People in my yoga class think I have reached Nirvana, and I owe it all to these little bits of bile that I get to spit out on a monthly basis.

In all the time that I have written this column, though, I have always made a promise to myself – I have always tried to avoid band wagons. I don't like them. I like to think of myself as an individual. Angry, bitter, twisted, sardonic and overly nasty, but still an individual. So band wagons have little appeal; after all, if I bitched about the same thing as everyone else, I would be a voice in the crowd, and that would do little to feed my over-inflated ego. Having a head this big isn't easy, you know, so you need to keep the ball rolling before it deflates. Even if I were to bitch about the same thing as everyone else, I would try to look for a unique angle, even play Devil's advocate if I had to.

This quest for individuality has meant that there has always been one topic that has been completely taboo in my column. It is not a flash in the pan, not a vapid or brief occurrence. It is something that people complain about every day, and so is very far from my list of things to talk about. Today, though, I am going to break that oath. I am going to compromise the few principles I have left and leap into the fray that I have successfully avoided for so long. I am going to complain about the same thing as everyone else and watch my ego take a bruising because of it. I am going to talk, boys and girls, about Telkom.

Everyone has a Telkom story. Some are better than others, but they all have the same end result, one that I do not have to elaborate on. I actually have a few Telkom stories, but the most recent one is probably the most amusing... or should that be bemusing?

I live, for reasons that I am not going to go into, in the country to the north of Jo'burg. Suffice to say it's easier to hide in the country. Anyway, out here amongst the weirdos and inbreeders, life can get pretty dull. After all, you can only laugh at the three eyed kid who's father is also his uncle so many times. So, on a whim, I decided (shortly after moving here, around 15 months ago – that kid got boring quickly) to get an ADSL line. Xbox Live and all that, right? So I dutifully called Telkom. As it turns out, I might live in the styx, but the area is still within the ADSL footprint. It might be the flaky bit of post-athlete's foot skin on the end of a toe, but it's in the footprint. I gave all my details to the bored sounding customer consultant on the other end of the line, and sat back, confident in the fact that, within six to eight weeks, I would be surfing the internet in style.

Yes, I had heard the stories. Everyone has heard the stories. However, we have a "won't happen to me" culture. HIV/AIDS, cancer, dying in a terrible car crash, problems with Telkom... won't happen to me! I failed to remember that the day Telkom offers efficient service, a flock of migratory swine

will be spotted heading north over the Equator.


Six to eight MONTHS later I was still getting the same story from Telkom: the infrastructure cannot support another ADSL line in your area at the moment. That's when I cancelled my order, blasting the hapless person on the other end of the line with my righteous anger. That was around 6 months ago.

In the interim, our free-market economy was stimulated when a few kilometers of telephone cable was liberated from the imprisoning poles that held it, and sent into the world as emancipated scrap metal. I decided that an HSDPA connection via one of the cellular providers was the way to go, and duly got it set up (in a sum total of around an hour.) I was happy. It wasn't as fast as a dedicated DSL line, but it was internet access.

Three days ago, I get a phone call, with a cheery Telkom employee informing me that my ADSL line would be installed within the next fifteen days. After a moment of contemplative silence, I agreed. I did mention that I had cancelled my order, but it fell on deaf ears. I did mention that I had already gone with a cellular service provider, but the ears will still pretty much be impaired. What made me decide to let Telkom come and install my ADSL line is the following: the lines have still not been replaced. I don't know much about technology, but I am pretty sure that you need lines for ADSL to run.

So, I have found something new to laugh at out here in the country. It will be a once off, of course, but the hapless guy who has to come install the ADSL has to do so with no service provided to the area. No three eyed kid can compete with the potential level of comedy that this situation will generate. The popcorn is ready and waiting. **NAG**



The background of the entire page is a detailed illustration. On the right, a close-up of a woman with long, wavy blonde hair and a serious expression. She is wearing ornate, golden-brown armor. On the left, a large, roaring bear-like creature with blue markings on its fur is visible. The overall color palette is dominated by warm, golden, and brown tones, with some blue highlights from the creature's markings and the woman's hair.

GUILD WARS®

Eye of the North™

AVAILABLE 31st AUGUST

PC DVD
ROM

megarom
interactive

www.megarom.co.za

Tel: +27 11 361 4800

sales@megarom.co.za

EU.GUILDWARS.COM

*Requires product purchase and access to Internet. Player is responsible for all applicable Internet fees.
© 2005 - 2007 NCsoft Europe Ltd. All rights reserved. NCsoft, the interlocking NC logo, ArenaNet, Guild Wars, Guild Wars Factions, Guild Wars Nightfall and all associated logos and designs are trademarks or registered trademarks of NCsoft Corporation. All other trademarks or registered trademarks are property of their respective owners.



NCSOFT





MSI
MICRO-STAR INTERNATIONAL

innovation with style

A New Legend Begins...

MSI K9AG series, your HDMI platform!

1969

Neil
Armstrong
1st step on
the moon

2000

MSI is the 1st
to deliver
Mainboards
for Slot A

2003

MSI is the 1st
to deliver
Mainboards
for the AMD64
platform

2006

MSI is the 1st
to deliver
Mainboards
for socket AM2,
64-bit, DDRII

2007

MSI is the 1st
to deliver
Mainboards with
integrated HDMI



K9AGM2-FIH

- AMD 690G/SB600 chipset based
- Supports Dual Core AMD Athlon64/X2 AM2 CPU
- 2 Dual Channel DDRII 800 up to 4GB
- Build in ATI X1250 DX9 VGA with HDMI
- Supports 4 SATAII, RAID 0, 1, 0+1 up to 3.0GB/sec
- 1 PCI Express x16, 1 PCI Express x1, 2 PCI slots
- 8 x USB 2.0 ports, 10/100/1000LAN and FireWire
- 7.1 channel High Definition Audio(5.1 on HDMI)
- ATI Video Optimizing "Avivo" Technology
- Dual CoreCenter with Vista ready
- Micro-ATX form factor



K9AGM2-F

- AMD 690V/SB600 chipset based
- Supports Dual Core AMD Athlon64/X2 AM2 CPU
- 2 Dual Channel DDRII 800 up to 4GB
- Build in ATI X1250 DX9 VGA
- Supports 4 SATAII, RAID 0, 1, 0+1 up to 3.0GB/sec
- 1 PCI Express x16, 1 PCI Express x1, 2 PCI slots
- 8 x USB 2.0 ports, 10/100/1000LAN and FireWire
- 7.1 channel High Definition Audio
- ATI Video Optimizing "Avivo" Technology
- Dual CoreCenter with Vista ready
- Micro-ATX form factor



K9AG Neo-F

- AMD 690V/SB600 chipset based
- Supports Dual Core AMD Athlon64/X2 AM2 CPU
- 2 Dual Channel DDRII 800 up to 4GB
- Build in ATI X1250 DX9 VGA
- Supports 4 SATAII, RAID 0, 1, 0+1 up to 3.0GB/sec
- 1 PCI Express x16, 2 PCI Express x1, 3 PCI slots
- 10 x USB 2.0 ports, 10/100/1000LAN
- 7.1 channel High Definition Audio
- ATI Video Optimizing "Avivo" Technology
- Dual CoreCenter with Vista ready
- ATX form factor

WHERE TO BUY

Pinnacle
MICRO

0861 00 8000
Pinnacle Micro Branches
Midrand: 011 265 3000, Cape Town: 021 551 3310, Durban: 031 263 2090, East London: 043 735 2699
Port Elizabeth: 041 365 1088, Nelspruit: 013 752 2846, Bloemfontein: 051 447 1000
Namibia: 00264 61 248478, Botswana: 00267 353 7477, Zambia: 00260 124 1408
www.pinnacle.co.za

lightedge

0861 10 0278
Lightedge Branches
Midrand: (011)3156680, Cape Town: (021)5145145, Durban: (031)2630121,
Port Elizabeth: (041)3673062, Nelspruit: (013)7526399, Windhoek: 0926461 241026
http://www.lightedge.co.za/

www.msi.com.tw

HALO 3

FINISHING THE FIGHT

The third and final chapter of the current Halo storyline is about to launch around the world. With one more game to make up for the sins of Halo 2 and keep the series on its seemingly insurmountable throne before Bungie embarks on something new – Halo or otherwise – what can fans and new gamers expect from Master Chief's final bid to save humanity?

“TYPICALLY MY MORNING STARTS by weeping at my desk for thirty minutes. Then I get to work.” The developer was kidding when he said this in Bungie’s promotional documentary of the game, but the sentiment was real. *Halo 3* represented a monster for the company, one that has grown in huge and unexpected ways. There are other sources that can be credited with the Xbox’s very survival, giving Microsoft’s ambitious experiment a boost in the arm when it needed it. But only the really annoying kind of person could bring up a proper equivalent for what Halo did. The same type of person who thinks really knowing the difference between all your wines is a substantial achievement in the bigger scheme of things. Granted, that would have to be the case for a wine connoisseur

and perhaps as game journalists we should be able to come up with a complimenting example. But we really can’t. *Halo* basically carried the Xbox and Live services to glorious highs. It also made the online force of the console FPS one to be reckoned.

A CHECKERED PAST

That’s a hefty achievement for what was originally a PC game once hailed as the second coming of gaming when it would have been released, right alongside the to-be-mind-blowing *Freelancer*. Those were the glorious days when we were swooned by talk of space-ships entering and exiting atmospheres at a whim and androids running in and out of areas in a huge looping world without load times. Both suffered

huge delays. *Freelancer* ended up being remembered for its control system and *Halo* made the jump to the Xbox and from a third-person to first-person vantage. It also swung away from being a squad-tactical military action game to a cut-and-dry action shooter that didn’t take any real chances with its design, especially when it came to the levels that were as repetitive as a wallpaper pattern.

But as things turned out that was exactly what the Xbox and consoles at large needed. Not a shooter that tried too hard to be different in order to separate itself from the sneering and taunting PC titles and certainly not another third-person game. Everyone knew consoles were good at those. But solid it-moved-kill-it gameplay with a control system that made it so easy to kill moving things just meshed well.





Halo was really, by and large, a very dull game with a really dull story and pretty pointless locations. But the weapons were nice, the main character had that Judge Dredd helmet cool going for him and there were all-terrain vehicles to roll over alien terra-firma.

THE ONLINE GOD

That made for a good game, at least on a console that really had little else truly going for it when things came to solid mass-appeal games and a platform that really lacked the macho adrenaline homicide the first person shooter genre dished out. It's not like the story mattered anyway. When *Halo* joined the Live party and started dancing on the table, Bungie and Microsoft never looked back. People just loved playing *Halo* online and it created a legion of followers, specifically because they loved fragging each other and could do it on a console. It also showed a few PC gamers that you can play a console shooter online and not feel stupid about it. Everyone won, especially Microsoft. In the Xbox's tragically early twilight years (it was really to start coming into its own), *Halo 2* arrived, giving Redmond license to boast that it made more money than *Spider-Man 2*'s box-office takings on the same day – both (not) incidentally on their launch days. *Halo 2* did of course cost five times as much as a movie ticket, but let's not worry about such little details. There was no doubt a lot of people bought it. By this point the plot line became something contrived and complicated, but no-one noticed. Most people ended up playing the multiplayer.

This might have been what prompted a new campaign meta system, which will award players with stuff like special armor sets for multiplayer, not to mention online ranking of your performance in the level. If there is still doubt that *Halo* was faltering in single player, *Halo 3* will even have 4-player co-op, using Master Chief, the

Arbiter and two new fellows with funny names no doubt only the pedantic fans will memorize. Story was never really part of *Halo*'s bigger destiny, since no-one would have expected years ago that the heavily-hyped PC game would become Moses leading the masses to the Xbox.

TITANICAL EXPECTATIONS FOR A TITAN

The developer was having a hypothetical cry because the real pressure around *Halo 3* has been the multiplayer. It's not the delusional result of spending too much time indoors on coffee either. *Crackdown* flew off shelves on the sheer feature that with it you could play the *Halo 3* multiplayer beta. The fans are also very demanding. *Halo 2* was a success, but it didn't quite create the magic the way *Halo* delivered it. They wanted much more and *Halo 3* is aiming to please. Not that the third and final iteration of the (current) series doesn't have a major ace up its sleeve. *Halo 3* will be the first of the family to appear on the next generation, making ample use of the 360's power to make its point. With the higher octane hardware, elaborate animations and pack behavior from the AI have become big selling points. Visually it won't be a slouch either. The most startling and definitive statement of the game's graphics are the first scenes that were revealed. Master Chief stood on the edge of a vast crater, watching Covenant ships fly overhead and poke at a massive, ancient artifact in the middle of it all. According to Bungie that is all real: a feat pulled off with dynamic light, every kind of bump and specular mapping you can throw at the machine, not to mention a 16 kilometer – yes, sixteen – drawing distance. Not all of these touch-ups were present in the beta, but it would appear that the developer wants to put to rest complaints about *Halo* and *Halo 2*'s graphical shortcomings. Granted, it still

looks a lot like *Halo* always did and isn't likely to blow you away when compared to the real next-gen graphinistas like *Assassin's Creed* and *Unreal Tournament 3*. But it looks as stunning as you'd expect it to be.

LIVING IT UP ON LIVE

But the real focus is multiplayer. Even *Halo 2*'s rule over Live was only broken by the titanic *Gears of War* and *Halo 3* is set to break any hold a game has held over the service before. Apart from numerous improvements, such as rank penalties for quitting during a match, a useful button to mute annoying players and the return of *Halo*'s assault rifle as the spawn weapon, *Halo 3* will also let players record macro movies of their games. In other words the movie is rendered in real-time using the game engine, so you just download a 6mb file but it renders to whatever your system is set at. In these movies players will be able to forward, rewind, slow down and change the camera angle to get the best vantage of how and why they got their ass kicked. The movies will also be shared across the Live network and players can edit them down to create highlight packages or just remove the bits everyone were standing around doing nothing.

With the amount of work going into the game, it's clear that this will not be the end of the *Halo* FPS world, even though *Halo 3* will mark the end of the trilogy – allowing fans to finish all the fights started since the series appeared. Even if you are not interested in playing online, the campaign promises to be full of action and surprises, with nastier enemies and more places to traverse (from jungles to cities to deserts). Rumor has it that we might even see what the chief looks like without his helmet, though that is likely to evoke a lot of mixed feelings. From our perspective we say keep it on. Nothing says bad ass quite like the incognito attitude a mean helmet and visor gives a character.



ET TU BRUTE?

Apart from working on the game, Bungie has also been going around torturing Latin. The multiplayer documentary was called *Is Quisnam Protero Damno*, which is apparently a very terrible way to say He Who Walks in Hell. At least, that's what's assumed it says. It could also mean He Who Crushed Underfoot Violently. Another doccie was called *Et Tu, Brute*, a pun on the Brute units that make a return from *Halo 2*. Whereas there the Brutes felt like a tacked-on race to give Master Chief something else to shoot, in *Halo 3* they shape up a lot more to become the barbarians they are meant to be. Standing at eight feet tall, the Brutes look like something between a rhino and gorilla, adorned with heavy armour and foul dispositions. For this purpose Bungie has been working on more elaborate and violent animations, such as Brutes ripping arms off opponents, dual-wielding sabers and tipping over Warthogs. The Brutes will come in three ranks – from grunts to chieftains – and Brute leaders will be able to command their soldiers to do specific things, like all throwing grenades at the spot you are hiding. These monsters also have to their disposal the Brute Chopper, an imposing one-wheeled bike that can ram other vehicles into pieces. To compliment their aggressive tactics a bit more, Brutes will also carry Spike Grenades, essentially nail bombs that can stick to any surface.

When did work start on *Halo 3*? Did Bungie increase the development team?

Work on *Halo 3* started just as we were finishing *Halo 2*. So it's been in development for about three years, and the team has more than doubled in size, to about 120 people since then.

Who is producing the game? Can you elaborate on some of the key members of the team?

Harold Ryan is the big boss – as Studio Manager, but there's a cast of dozens responsible for the game in its entirety – with Engineers like Chris Butcher and Charlie Gough, tons of artists led by Marcus Lehto, music from Marty O'Donnell, cinematics from CJ Cowan, Jaime Griesemer handling the "sandbox" design and really, just too many awesome people to list. They're all in the game credits.

***Halo 3* will be the end of the current storyline. But it's not the end of *Halo*. Are there plans for a multiplayer-only game, episodic content or future trilogies?**

We won't comment on future plans other than to say that we're working on downloadable content for *Halo 3*.

Has the staff of Bungie grown tired of the series? Is it looking towards something new and refreshing?

We're always investigating new ideas, and we have a ton. Certainly many folks on the team would like to try their hand at something new, and Bungie has never been a single genre developer.

Was the storyline pre-planned or has it been designed with every iteration of the series?

It was pre-planned to the extent it could be, but innovations in level and game design overall usually require adjustments to the plot, if not the overarching themes and events.

The multiplayer aspect of *Halo* has become the series' strongest pillar. Was it challenging to make sure this didn't dilute the single player campaign?

Actually, that's an arguable point. We find that more folks play Campaign overall, than multiplayer – although obviously far more time is spent in MP. That said, fictionally, MP has always simply tipped a wry nod and a wink in the direction of Campaign. We seldom bother trying to explain why 16 Spartans are fighting each other in a box canyon...

What prompted the move to 4-player co-op?

Demand and then the fun we had playing it. We cut lots of features if we try them and they suck. This was not one of those features. Two player and three player are just as fun too.

Was the campaign meta-game included to encourage more players to play the campaign mode?

It was designed as a meta game – to encourage competitiveness and teamwork simultaneously. It should be just as fun, in its own way, as achieving the regular campaign goals.

While the Xbox titles have been great, the PC versions are considered very inferior. Why do you think this gap exists? Has Bungie ever discussed plans or strategies to bring the PC game closer to the console experience?

HALO 3

Q&A

We pick the brain of Frank O'Connor, *Halo 3*'s lead writer, about a few aspects of the game...





We didn't create the PC versions, so we'll have to take your word for it.

Will *Halo 3* feature female voice options for multiplayer?

Yes. You can choose your Spartan's gender for voice. Not for appearance. This was thanks to huge demand from the female gaming community.

Were the multiplayer and campaign modes developed by different teams? How much cross-over happened between them?

There is a distinct multiplayer team, yes, but everyone shares assets and techniques and people. So the division is hardly as abrupt as it sounds on paper. The single player sandbox is largely identical to the multiplayer one.

Please tell us more about the support weapons. How did they end up in the game and can you give us a few examples of the hardware?

We have a number of weapons, turrets and so on, that can be described as support weapons. A good example is the machine gun turret. There's one level where it's useful for defending from a Drone attack – with its infinite ammo, but a smart player might make better use of it by ripping it from its mount (sacrificing the unlimited ammo feed) and taking it deeper into the battle. The same would apply to plasma weapons and missile pods.

Were there ever discussions about abandoning the campaign for a multiplayer-only game?

No. Campaign is the core of our game. *Halo* is a story, and the story requires Campaign.

Why should new players be interested in *Halo 3* if they never played the previous two games?

It should be easier to pick up and lay, yet ultimately deeper and more fun than the other two games. And the story stuff, we'll bring you up to speed on. You don't have to be a *Halo* expert to enjoy *Halo 3*, but hopefully it will make you want to become a *Halo* expert.

Where did the idea for the movie system come from? Do you have more elaborate plans for it in the future, such as facilitating the production of Machinima clips?

The movie system is an extension of stuff we (Bungie) and other developers have included in games before, but with the emphasis shifted to making it fun, accessible and more importantly, easily shared. Machinima fans will go nuts with this stuff in Campaign and Multiplayer and we're genuinely excited to see what comes from the community.

***Halo 3* gave Bungie the chance to use ideas that didn't make it into the past titles. Were any great ideas left on the cutting room floor during *Halo 3*'s development?**

Not this time, but a couple of old cut items from other games actually sneaked back in...

Do the staff suffer from occasional *Halo* overload? What else do you do to take the edge off and refresh your minds?

We actually all play *Halo 3* for fun, sad as that sounds, but if we were not enjoying our own game, then we shouldn't expect regular players to enjoy it either. In that regard, us playing too much *Halo 3* is probably a good thing. **NAG**



HALO 3

The Return....

Available in:

• **Standard Edition - R599⁹⁹**

• **Limited Edition - R699⁹⁹**

Includes: - Limited Edition Halo Tin
- Bonus Disc
- Limited Edition Halo 3
Art Book

• **Legendary Edition - R899⁹⁹**

Includes: - Master Chief Helmet
- Halo Spartan Mjolnir
Mark VI Helmet Replica
- 3 Bonus Discs
- Collection of Cinematics
- Each unit will be
serialized for added
individuality and
collectability

Look & Listen - NAG's preferred gaming retailer.

DVD • CD • GAMES • MP3 • ACCESSORIES

GAUTENG - Fourways: 011 467 1115 • Cresta: 011 476 4142 • Hyde Park: 011 325 4237 • East Rand: 011 823 3642

Clearwater: 011 675 3648 • Lenasia: 011 852 3231 • Atterbury: 012 991 6626 • Menlyn: 012 368 1080 • Greenstone: 011 524 0049 **Now Open**

DURBAN - Pavilion: 031 265 1600 • **FREE STATE** - Bloemfontein: **Opening Aug 07** • **WESTERN CAPE** - Cavendish: 021 683 1810

Century City: 021 551 4647 • Willowbridge: 021 914 0760 • Worcester: 023 342 1502 • **NORTH WEST** - Rustenburg: 014 537 3466

MPUMALANGA - Nelspruit: 013 752 4524 • Witbank: 013 692 4530 **Now Open**

Shop online at www.lookandlisten.co.za. Open 'til 10.30pm, 7 days a week.

While stocks last. E&OE. Prices and availability subject to change at the discretion of the supplier.



eBucks

The Reward of Choice



credit



Discovery
Imagine a little more



Look & Listen
For the Fans

CONSENSUS AND TENURE

WE'RE ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT stuff we want, here at the NAG-o-plex - but we rarely come to any kind of agreement as to what we should get for us, meaning everyone, here at the office. Most people have personal wishlists that involve far too many ThinkGeek or Amazon.com items,

but this month we all brainstormed a little to try and come up with a list of things we'd like to have here at the office, that everyone can use and enjoy. After all, we work too hard. All work and no play makes NAG a dull magazine.

EMPIRE EARTH III

Developer→ Mad Doc | **Publisher**→ Vivendi
Platforms→ PC | **Genre**→ Strategy | **Release Date**→ Q4 2007

HOW BIG DO YOU like your strategy titles to be? Not *Homeworld* big, as in a large fleet of oblivion, nor *Supreme Commander* big, where the size of economy should match the US national debt level, but big as in spanning across borders and continents, not to mention ages? *Empire Earth* has slowly been inching its way towards this reality for a while - quite a while if you take into account its *Age of Empires* roots. The series has also since changed hands to the skilled development team of Mad Doc, which has been making a good name for itself enhancing games that were spawned by other studios. With *Empire Earth III*, players will be able to battle across the globe, building cities and weapons in one country and then sending them through to fight somewhere else. Units will also be persistent, so they can go from one battle to another, though this isn't a new feature to the series. On top of all that remains the *EE* core: taking a civilisation from cavemen through to technology giants, using force, trade and diplomacy along the way to make its mark. This second sequel will definitely fill a gap for fans, though it remains to be seen if *Empire Earth* will manage to attract some new players amongst all its competitors in the RTS genre.



CARS MATER-NATIONAL

Developer→ Rainbow Studios | **Publisher**→ THQ
Platforms→ PS2, PS3, DS, 360
Genre→ Racing | **Release Date**→ Q4 2007

LIGHTNING MCQUEEN'S BEST MATE, the rusty buck-toothed Mater (like tamater, but without the 'ta'), has decided to hold a racing event so that the world's top racers will all get a chance to see if they can beat the rookie champion from Pixar's *Cars*. More to the point, after the first *Cars* game became a huge selling success - moving over 6 million units and becoming 2006's number two selling game - a sequel was inevitable. No one is complaining, because *Cars* was a great if very simplistic racing game. So it's back to the tarmac, but without the restrictions of a movie plot to follow. This time the game will feature familiar and new cars to race or race against, as well as a new Monster mode. This is essentially the cars, but on big wheels and take on Monster Truck races and events. The world of Radiator Springs, where the game takes place, has been expanded quite a bit, giving fans more places to visit and race around. New mini games and multiplayer modes will also arrive with the package.



VIVA PIÑATA: PARTY ANIMALS

Developer→ Krome Studios | **Publisher**→ Microsoft
Platforms→ 360 | **Genre**→ Party
Release Date→ December 2007

THE *TASMANIAN TIGER* developer Krome takes over the reigns from Rare to develop this *Viva Piñata* spin-off game. It's not a sequel, nor an extension of your usual gardening/farming/shovel bashing antics. Instead, *Party Animals* takes to the popular crowd of party games. Taking control of one of the games cute candy containers, you and up to three friends (locally or over Live) can take part in over 40 mini games and about a dozen races, all part of a new reality television show that has taken the island by storm. What else is there to say? It's an interesting addition to the *Viva Piñata* brand, which managed to survive despite the terrible and woefully low-rated animated television series. The two, of course, had very little to do with each other, as you'd know if you were one of the many people who got giddy from playing the game for hours and hours. A party game is a tricky proposition, though, especially since you will inevitably be compared to the *Mario Party* series. On the flip-side, the 360 is still begging for a decent title in this genre, though the last *Rayman* offering wasn't half bad.



SIMS 2 CASTAWAY

Developer→ EA | Publisher→ EA | Platforms→ PS2
Genre→ Management | Release Date→ TBA

ALRIGHT! WE'VE DONE IT all – made the house, bought the furniture, got the job, made babies, sent them to varsity, have a party, got a pet, set something on fire and bought more furniture. Like the real thing, life is only so much fun when you are part of the daily rat race, even at the liberal work hours the average Sim (or its pet) must suffer through. We'll tell you this: we've worked much harder than our Sims ever did, yet we still don't have our own jacuzzi. Fortunately it appears every Sim has the same desire that all of us do – to be washed up on a remote tropical island and live off the land, namely coconuts and the occasional fat monkey. *Castaway* drops a Sim off on a remote island where he/she will need to fend for themselves. In other



words, you'll have to fend for them, including food, getting a nice place to sleep, not to mention complete challenges on the island. According to

an EA employee, it's *The Sims* meets *Survivor*, so maybe your Sim can also frolic naked in the waves and fall into the occasional fire.

THE LEGEND OF SPYRO: THE ETERNAL NIGHT

Developer→ Krome Studios | Publisher→ Sierra
Platforms→ DS, GBA, Mob, PS2, Wii | Genre→ Platformer | Release Date→ October 2007

THE SECOND OF A trilogy, Spyro the cute purple dragon is still trying to find his inner dragon or something. He also has to stop the Ape King and his plans to resurrect the Dark Master, who judging by the name isn't going to be a nice fellow. Spyro has long been a part of gaming lore and is arguably Vivendi's most successful character franchise, especially since Crash's haphazard appearances. In *Eternal Night*, Spyro will have four new elemental attacks, including aerial attacks, new fire breath attacks, a couple of extra fury attacks, not to mention the new ability called 'Dragon Time'. As you might surmise from the name, this gives Spyro some sort of time-control ability, basically allowing him to dodge attacks and maneuver around enemies with more ease. It's not a new gimmick, but not an unwelcome one either. The fact sheet also promises epic boss battles, which we'll assume means much bigger confrontations than the series has delivered before.



HEAVY RAIN

Developer→ Quantic Dreams | Publisher→ TBA
Platforms→ PS3 | Genre→ Adventure | Release Date→ TBA

GAMES HAVE BEEN DELIVERING cool characters for gamers to fight over, fall for or blow into pieces for a long time, but you can hardly mistake any of them for something that might be real. Even the cheesy full motion video stuff from the nineties still managed to keep an emotional distance between players and the events in the game. This is starting to change, with the most apt example being the upcoming *Mass Effect*'s insanely detailed facial expressions. But before that another game was already doing a lot of exploration into the emotions that can be invoked. People

who have played it will hopefully know that we are talking about *Fahrenheit*, also known as *Indigo Prophecy*. The team behind that, Quantic Dreams, debuted the technology for its next game, *Heavy Rain*, at E3 last year, absolutely stunning audiences with a female character that swept from tears to anger, stopping over at a few other emotional rest stops along the way. The game has been confirmed as a PS3 exclusive and will be very, very impressive. But will it appeal to a larger audience, something that kept *Fahrenheit* out of the hands of the masses?



WHAT WE WANT AT THE NAG OFFICE

A NINTENDO WII

Miktar bought one for himself and it broke (it has the chipset flaw that plagues many a Wii unit right now), leaving us without a Wii. What we really want, is a working Wii for here at the office. Every now and then, one of us gets this far-off, dreamy look where we imagine ourselves playing more Wii *Tennis* or having a go at that Everybody Votes channel. We dream such nice dreams, and in colour too.

A MULTIPURPOSE TABLE

Quite a few of the NAG staffers are ping-pong/table tennis fans, but not all of them have the manual or cognitive dexterity to enjoy Rockstar's *Table Tennis* offering on the 360 (which remains the best digital rendition of table tennis to date). So, what we really need here at the NAG office (you listening, boss?) is a table tennis table, perfect for relieving stress and annoying everyone in earshot. And if that table tennis table can also convert into a pool table, and a poker table, all the better!

ASUS XONAR D2 SOUND CARDS FOR EVERYBODY!

We've all been using crappy onboard soundcards for so long, we've forgotten how nice a proper, quality soundcard actually sounds in comparison. A bit like eating nothing but noodles for a few years, and then suddenly having a bite of a cheeseburger. The solitary Xonar D2 that came in for review, now sits on a pillar of pure gold as we all do a little chanting dance in a circle around it, wishing the hardware rain god to bless us with more.

AN ENERGY-DRINK FRIDGE OF HOLDING

We're rockstars, and rockstars need their drink. We'd like nothing more than a perpetually restocked energy-drink fridge to fuel our creative juices and give us heart-attacks at 30. If the fridge could also perhaps dispense candy bars or Whispers, all the better. Oh, and it should be able to use the Internet connection wirelessly to e-mail us when it's been restocked, so that we don't have the heartbreak of walking all the way to it, only to find it empty.

BEANBAGS

Can you believe it? We're the Gaming Gods of South Africa, and there isn't a single beanbag anywhere in the office to just flop onto when you just can't bear the weight anymore and need to flop on to something. You can't flop on to an office chair, you'll hurt yourself. A desk isn't comfortable to flop onto either, and there are always cups and pens in your way. The carpet is too rough on our delicate skins. Nope, we need beanbags, *STAT!*

HEAVENLY SWORD

LET'S CUT PAST ALL the usual preface and just go straight to the inevitable. Even based only on the single-chapter preview code we were given, it is plain as day that *Heavenly Sword* will be "the one to have" if you have a PlayStation 3 in the same way *Gears of War* is the "one to have" if you own an Xbox 360. In fact, already the Internet is alight with Nelson-esq comments of "Haw Haw, three-sux-tee owners don't get *Heavenly Sword* and it's better than anything on *LameBox!*" and other such insightful objective commentary.

But to be perfectly fair, *Heavenly Sword* is indeed looking quite heavenly. It's obvious Sony and Ninja Theory are throwing everything they have at it both in terms of

money and talent to make sure that the PS2 has that "killer app" it so desperately needs. They even went so far as to nab Andy Serkis to play the invading King Botan - you may not know the CG actor by name but he's quite famous for his role as Gollum in the *Lord of the Rings* movies and Kong in the recent *King Kong* adaptation. It becomes very apparent during every luxurious in-engine cutscene that the talent is being well utilized - every raised eyebrow, curl of the lips and subtle nuance is being conveyed with glorious effect, and King Botan himself completely dominates any scene except perhaps for those containing the psychotic sexually ambiguous Flying Fox who has blades coming out from practically every orifice.



The game follows a dramatic tale of revenge as Nariko goes about trying to seek vengeance on an invading King and his army. The story revolves around the ancient Heavenly Sword, once wielded by God, and un-wieldable by a mortal without eventually killing them. Nariko takes up the sword and must now destroy the king and his army before it inevitably kills her.

Heavenly Sword plays out as an oddball mix between *God of War* and a more stoic *Ninja Gaiden*. The combat may appear to be a button-mashing affair but after a few minutes of uselessly beating against enemies with shields to no effect, one has to examine the combat system in more detail which reveals some interesting nuance.



Developer→ Ninja Theory | Publisher→ SCEE | Genre→ Action | Release→ September 2007

PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

360

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB



Nariko has three stances - speed, range and heavy. In range stance, her weapon becomes a flurry of wide arcs and gushes of winds that not only serves to disperse clustered enemies around her but will also deflect incoming arrows in a way that would make Jet Li proud. In heavy stance, the Heavenly Sword becomes a single powerful blade that will break through almost anything but at the risk of not being able to block any attacks except incoming heavy attacks (enemies glow orange before attacking with heavy attacks). Speed stance is the usual attack style and will block incoming speed attacks (enemies glow blue before attacking in speed), but won't block heavy attacks or ranged attacks.

What this means is that during combat you have to switch stances on the fly to handle the various situations you find yourself in. Holding L1 puts you in range stance, holding R1 puts you in heavy and speed is your standard attack without holding anything. If you're quick and notice an enemy glowing orange before attacking, you can hold R1 to block the attack flawlessly (blocking is automatic as long as you are in the right stance) or alternatively hit the attack button right before impact to reverse the attack for some impressive damage.

There are combination moves that involve alternating between the two attack buttons, with more that unlock as you progress. Doing heavy attacks will tend to unlock more heavy combination moves while range and speed unlock more for their own categories respectively. One button is dedicated to Supermoves which require Orbs to activate. Orbs charge up as you fight and once you have a few, simply pressing the O button near an enemy will rapidly cut camera angles as Nariko starts to do her thing. One specific Supermove which requires two Orbs has Nariko launch the enemy into the air with some kicks and swipes, before flying up after him only to bring him back down to the ground, head first, with her foot planted firmly

on his crotch. It looks painful.

The obligatory SIXAXIS motion-sensing stuff makes an appearance albeit in a slightly tacked-on fashion. If you launch an enemy into the air, you can flick the controller upwards to follow the enemy and do some aerial attacks. If you throw chair, weapon or shield picked up from the ground, you can hold down the throw button to follow the thrown item through the air, steering it left and right slightly by tilting the controller. This often leads to comical results and you can also throw the bodies of slain enemies.

Every now and then, the game will divide up the screen into multiple pictures to show you more of the action or highlight important elements. One part of the Chapter involves shooting arrows to cover the retreat of Nariko's father, who remains visible at all times at the top right as he limps along. The picture-in-picture element is used to great effect and certainly adds a dramatic flair.

The preview code was not without its issues however, and it's unclear how much of this will be fixed up before the final ships. Often the music cuts in and out violently, especially during a Supermove, and Nariko herself sometimes seems to be slightly laggy to control, possibly due to how the combat system links things together. The physics also need to be tweaked a little, enemies tend to bounce around comically once killed and occasionally a bit of wood would just hover in midair, emitting a horrible racket as it vibrates against imaginary forces. Framerate issues plagued the more spectacular scenes and cutscenes, but those will undoubtedly be smoothed out before hitting store shelves.

Everything in *Heavenly Sword* oozes quality and polish and while the combat system may throw people off initially, it is an incredibly satisfying system once mastered - it scales up beautifully from single opponents to group fights and more than once the entire NAG office stopped to look at the spectacular visuals and kinetic martial arts. **NAG**

PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

360

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB



JUICED 2: HOT IMPORT NIGHTS

GENTLEMEN, START YOUR ENGINES! It's time to get *Juiced* again, taking some of the meanest and most beautiful street racing machines to the public roads for a bit of legal racing action. *Juiced 2* has aligned itself with the *Hot Import Nights* (HIN) event, a U.S. auto show that focuses on tuned imports and the street racing that goes with them. If you've played the original *Juiced*, you'll remember a game that might have been flawed in a lot of ways, but it brought at least as many new ideas to the stagnating street racing genre. *Juiced* was *Need For Speed* for gamers who preferred a slightly more challenging and cerebral way of burning rubber, complete with an event calendar system, crews and placing bets on races and racers. Since then developer Juice Games has grown much closer to publisher THQ, which in turn upped support and funding for what it saw as its answer to EA and Rockstar's entries into the market. If you ask most people who played it, *Juiced* was ultimately the superior game out there, though it was over shadowed by *NFS*' flash and attitude.

Fortunately the game did well enough

to justify a sequel. Unfortunately it's being made to appeal to anyone who didn't play the first game and alienate anyone who did. Let's first look at the good. During a recent demonstration of the game at a local THQ event, *Juiced 2* looked great. From the street races that incorporate the HIN theme (such as models in hot pants swinging their hips on platforms) to the car models themselves, everything looks and feels very polished. The standard engine and visual upgrades are available as well, not to mention enough mods to make a gazillion combinations possible. A few new features debut, such as Driver DNA – these strands are generated from several factors around your driving, giving an idea of your abilities. Strands for other racers will also be available to download and race against. A separate multiplayer career will be available and cars will have complete log books that details their past wins, losses, mods and owners.

The bad news is that if you want something that resembles *Juiced*'s complexity, you'll be disappointed. In a move to appeal to far more people, the game has been dumbed down

substantially. The calendar system is gone and entries and repairs don't cost money anymore. But those are the small issues. The driving system itself is a lot more simplistic – this was rather evident when the THQ rep demonstrated drifting – it would appear that as long as you don't hit the sides, barely-controlled skidding also count towards drifting points. It's not terrible, but it's not what *Juiced* provided to racing fans. *Juiced 2* seems to be playing it safe by leaning on the conventions which made EA a lot of money; ironically *ProStreet* is going the opposite direction in philosophy. Will fans be impressed? We have our doubts, but extremely casual players who enjoy *PGR* on novice should get a big kick out of it. Hey, we could be wrong about this, but you didn't see the drifting. Our grandmother could have scored points playing that section... that's not what *Juiced* was about, was it? **NAG**

James Francis



WE HAVE YOU COVERED

IN THE AIR



Join the ranks of the elite 82nd Airborne Division in Medal of Honor Airborne.™ From Sicily to Germany, you'll fight the epic WWII battles that turned America's first paratroopers into combat legends. Begin each mission from the air, choose the perfect drop zone and then jump into the action anywhere you want. As the war progresses, you can customise your weapon with a huge variety of authentic WWII modifications. Featuring spectacular graphics and all-out combat intensity, Medal of Honor Airborne will redefine the WWII first person shooter genre.

XBOX 360

PLAYSTATION 3
coming soon



ON THE GREENS



You're facing a long putt for par on the 17th hole with Tiger Woods clinging to a one stroke lead. You've been in this position before, but that doesn't matter now. Or does it? Whether you play it safe or go for broke, Play with Confidence in Tiger Woods PGA TOUR® 08. The all-new Shot Confidence feature uses factors from your previous rounds - including club selection, lie, hole, and more - to determine your confidence heading into each shot. Play with the confidence of a pro as you battle the best golfers from the PGA TOUR and LPGA Tour on the most courses ever in your quest for the coveted FedEx Cup Championship.

PlayStation 2 XBOX 360
PLAYSTATION 3
PSP PC DVD



ON YOUR BOARD



skate is the closest thing to skateboarding without actually putting your feet on a board. Using the dual analog sticks, sculpt tricks and define your own style so that no two tricks will ever be the same. And there's plenty of room to pull off those tricks - San Vanelona, an authentic boarding mecca, challenges you to explore, find, and own the best spots. Capture footage to create and show off your style with people across the world - because without footage, it's fiction. Get ready for all the fun, creativity, and culture of skateboarding without the hours of practice, broken bones, and hospital visits.

XBOX 360

PLAYSTATION 3
coming soon



Contact any of our stores to speak to expert staff about any queries! or go to www.topcd.co.za

Top CD Menlyn: Shop LF57 & 58, Parking level 5A, Menlynpark Shopping Centre, cnr of Atterbury & Lois Ave. Pretoria (012) 361 6247.
Top CD Kolonade: Shop L70A, Lower level, Kolonade Shopping Centre, Zambezi Drive, Montana, Pretoria. (012) 548 5146.
Top CD Centurion: Shop 270 Entrance 5, Centurion Shopping Centre, Heuwel Avenue, Centurion. (012) 663 7468.
Top CD Cresta: Shop U44, Game entrance, Cresta Shopping Centre, Beyers Naude Drive, Randburg. (011) 476 7414.
Top CD Sunnypark: Shop 7, Lower level, Sunny Park Centre, Cnr Esselen and Jeppe Street, Sunnyside. (012) 341 0233.



www.ea.co.za



Even a nuclear war
can't kill Chuck



FALLOUT 3

LOOK, THERE REALLY ARE no two ways about it – Black Isle's *Fallout 2* was the greatest RPG ever. There's no point in disagreeing with us, and any insolent dissension will be attributed to an obviously advanced state of radiation poisoning or some sort of patently transparent Enclave conspiracy.

For those heretics who haven't played it, it's time to pay some long overdue attention. The playground of *Fallout* is a bombed-scarred American wasteland of twisted metal and burnt-out civilisation. According to the literature, in 2077, the planet was engulfed in an all-out apocalypse of atomic fire. Having sought refuge in enormous subterranean vaults, thousands of people were spared the cataclysm, and the merciless fury of a subsequent nuclear winter. Emerging many decades later, the survivors' descendants find a bleak and ravaged landscape, infested with creatures buckled and grotesquely distorted by radiation, and two-headed cows.

The series is known for its blacker-than-black humour, the S.P.E.C.I.A.L. system, and the ability to kill children. It's also remarkable

for its retro-futuristic aesthetic – the world of *Fallout* is not the hi-tech world we might reasonably imagine, but a vision of the future cultivated by the nuclear paranoia of the 1950s. Having secured the *Fallout* licence, Bethesda has been working on a third iteration since 2004 – and battling constant controversy. Would part three employ the same isometric view of its predecessors? Would it feature turn-based combat? Would we still be able to shotgun kiddies?

Since the recent release of a teaser trailer, as well as a number of widely-published interviews with the developer, some of these questions have been answered. Which has, of course, precipitated yet another storm of controversy. But let's get on with the preview.

Fallout 3 begins in Vault 101, somewhere under the shell-shocked remnants of Washington DC, about 30 years after the events of *Fallout 2*. For some mysterious reason, nobody has ventured out of this Vault since boom-boom day. Until now, that is. Your dad's up and done a runner, and you're off to find him.

In terms of gameplay mechanics, much of this is comfortably familiar. The S.P.E.C.I.A.L. (Strength, Perception, Endurance, Constitution, Intelligence, Agility, Luck) attribute system has been reinstated, as well as skill-tagging, perks, and karma titles. The PIP Boy reincarnation does double duty as a radio in addition to all the admin stuff – and will occasionally spit a quest or useful nugget of information out of the airwaves. Replacing the more traditional turn-based combat of *Fallout 1* and *2*, however, is something dubbed the Vault-tec Assisted Targeting System, or V.A.T.S. – a sort of new, improved implementation that somewhat resembles its predecessors' targeted shot mode. Sadly, groin targets are now out of bounds – so no more punching radscorpions in the goolies.

At this stage, little is known about the main storyline, other than that it spans approximately 20 hours of play, while an additional 20-odd hours of side quest rambling about has been confirmed. **NAG**

Tarryn van der Byl

Developer → Bethesda | Publisher → Bethesda | Genre → RPG | Release → 2008

PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

360

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB



Take the lead with Antec's TruePower Quattro™! With up to 1000 Watts and four 12V outputs, the stylish and compact Quattro efficiently provides stable and reliable power for your powerful processors and multiple graphics cards. The TruePower Quattro™ is designed to meet the 80PLUS® certification which means that it consumes about 33% less energy than many equivalent power supplies, without any reduction in quality performance! All modular cables are sleeved and labeled to give your system a clean and professional look, and the racing stripe paint job adds the extra flair you need to leave everyone else in the dust. For more information, visit www.antec.com.

Antec
The Power of You



FRONTOSA
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

JHB +27-11-466-0039

• CT +27-21-551-4411

• www.frontosa.co.za

PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

360

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB



COMPANY OF HEROES: OPPOSING FRONTS

COMPANY OF HEROES WAS a major success story for THQ last year and it comes as no surprise that they have started work on a follow-up stand alone expansion called *Company of Heroes: Opposing Fronts*. This expansion will run on an upgrade version of the original game's Essence Engine and will also support DirectX 10.

The game itself looks to be just as exhilarating as the first with all the same elements of strategy and a few more as well. For instance, there will be superior AI and physics as well as a whole new and improved weather effects system. Along with these improved features come new campaigns and missions that include such battles as what happened in Operation Market Garden. There are also two new playable armies which include the ability to play as the British or even the German Panzer Elite. The British army being more defensive focused, really blossom once they have started up a defensive front whereas the Panzer Elite armies focus more on gung-ho tactics and are at the opposite end of the scale when it comes down to offensive and defensive tactics. They are also the most mobile focused army in the game. *Company of Heroes: Opposing Fronts* has also gone to new levels of mission persistence which was only seen briefly on the original.

This mission persistence feature means that while playing through one scenario, the player must remember that if in the next mission he has to play on the same ground, the buildings and terrain would not of changed back to the original states. This adds whole new levels of realism as players must now think long term and of the big picture, instead of one mission at a time kind of attitude normally seen.

In terms of multiplayer, Relic have said that there will be all new playable modes and improved stats and ranking systems although not much has been said on what these new modes will be. One thing is for certain though: whether you own the original or not, you will still be allowed to play against the original armies. But to actually play as either German or American, you would have to buy the original as well.

No one can complain either that there has not been enough work done on the graphics because, according to the various screenshots, *Opposing Fronts* looks to have even prettier eye candy than the original.

Company of Heroes: Opposing Fronts will be released later on this year and while we must wait patiently for it, one thing is for certain and that is: War is upon us! Get ready to fight in some of the most realistic battles ever seen in a video game.

NAG
Justin Slabbert



Broadband

ADSL

From Webonline

Special Offer!

We provide modems or routers on monthly contracts at no additional charge. More information here: www.webonline.biz/adsloffer



ADSL options

R59.66
per GB

ADSL 3GB	→ R179 per month
ADSL 5GB	→ R299 per month
ADSL 7GB	→ R419 per month
ADSL 10GB	→ R599 per month
ADSL 15GB	→ R899 per month

Don't have an ADSL line yet?

- Order an ADSL line from Telkom on 10219
- Tell them you want to use Webonline as your ISP
- Contact Webonline on 0861-666-555 to order
- Our price excludes Telkom line rental

Hosting options

From

R15
per month

Linux Starter Hosting	→ R15 per month
Windows Starter Hosting	→ R45 per month
Linux Econo Hosting	→ R49 per month
Dedicated Server Hosting	→ R1536 per month

Powered by
PLESK
FOR WINDOWS



Powered by
PLESK
RELOADED



All Webonline's hosting packages include the following features:

- South African or US Servers
- FrontPage Server Extensions
- Spam Filtering
- Data Backups
- Plesk Control Panel
- Telephonic and E-mail support
- Virus Scanning
- And more

For full details visit www.webonline.biz
sales@webonline.biz | 0861-666-555



**WEBONLINE IS ONCE AGAIN EXPANDING
AND WE ARE IN NEED OF QUALITY STAFF**

We are looking for Support Staff, Accounts Staff,
Sales Staff and Programmers for our Pretoria office.

You will find more information at <http://webonline.biz/employment>



webonline
YOUR BETTER HOSTING SOLUTION



All services are subject to terms and conditions.
E & OE. All names and trademarks are the property of their
respective owners.



The buffet line was just too damn long

STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED

WE'RE NOT QUITE SURE why LucasArts opted to have Krome Studios force-push out their next Star Wars baby. While *Legend of Spyro: A New Beginning* and *Ty the Tasmanian Tiger* weren't horrible (in fact, they were rather nice), they certainly seem an odd pedigree for a *Star Wars* title.

The Force Unleashed continues the *Star Wars* saga and is set in the generally unexplored era between Episode III and IV. Players assume the role of Darth Vader's "Secret Apprentice" and the game promises to take the Force to an entirely new unprecedented level - and it's about time too. The story is being created under direction from Mr. Lucas himself and revolves around your character trying to purge the universe of Jedi.

There is a lot of fancy technology being thrown into *The Force Unleashed*, with names like Digital Molecular Matter (DMM) and "euphoria". DMM basically defines the physical properties of things in the environment, making wood behave like wood when it comes under impact, pressure or other physical interactions as well as making glass shatter believably and so fourth. It's a method for making broad definitions on the properties of the environment and, if used

correctly, could really open the game up to some impressive scenarios. Force pushing someone at a wooden wall will literally send them through the wall instead of just up against it. "euphoria" is a system for making enemies in the game be more self-aware, simulating their behaviour more realistically on the fly. Stormtroopers will try to save themselves by hanging on to ledges, wheel their arms around when caught off-balance or even try to escape life-threatening situations in a different way every time.

The Secret Apprentice will have four core Force powers - Push, Grip, Repulse and Lightning. Each will be upgradeable throughout the game and you'll be able to combine powers for interesting results, such as holding a Stormtrooper in the air, filling him with lightning before slamming him to the ground to make him explode like a bomb.

Not a lot of assets have been released for the game yet, aside from some screenshots and a rather dodgy trailer with possibly the worst Darth Vader voice ever conceived, but the Force seems to be strong in this one and with any luck it might just end up being the best *Star Wars* game yet. **NAG**

Miktar "bantha poodoo" Dracon





skate.™



www.ea.co.za



The scientist found a cloud. We're saved!



SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION: REVOLUTION

RISE AS A PEASANT! Fight as a warrior! Make strategic alliances with the rowdy Romans next door while you invade the Chinese, then turn on those Italians quicker than a bunch of marauding barbarians tearing apart your frontier towns. Yes, it's *Civilization* time! Arguably the biggest and most important strategy series ever conceived, Sid Meier's god game fits like an old shoe for most PC gamers out there. Even if you utterly hate any kind of management title, if you've been playing PC games for the past two decades, you must have at least touched either this series or *Sim City*. But while the epic quality of Will Wright's game existed within the wrangling of bureaucracy, *Civilization* took your across the ages and continents (real or randomly generated), giving you charge of your people to do with as you please. Will you be a ruthless leader who suppresses uprisings with force and destroys your neighbors for their land? Will you negotiate peace with your allies? Will your civilization define itself with advanced technology and great wealth? Will you tell Ghandi to go stuff himself? This and more will await in *Revolution*, a *Civ* game interpreted for consoles and hand-helds and what Meier says is the game he always wanted to make.

Judging by the screenshots, the visuals have become a bit more exaggerated, but the fundamentals appear to be in place. Create your cities, harvest and mine resources, explore into enemy territory and build an empire that will keep your enemies at bay and your friends close, especially since you built railroads first and will just about kick the ass of anyone who becomes uppity. Whether the age-old issue – a tank losing to a Neanderthal unit armed with a rock – will be fixed remains to be seen, but *Civilisation* making consoles its own is really exciting news. **NAG**

James Francis



Napoleon says:
You only get ONE
chance at world
domination!

Extreme Gaming!

Looking for the perfect gaming rig? ASUS' Gaming Series will give you what you are looking for - whether it is extreme graphics or computing performance.

■ PG221 LCD Monitor

Ideal Gaming Display for PC and Video Games

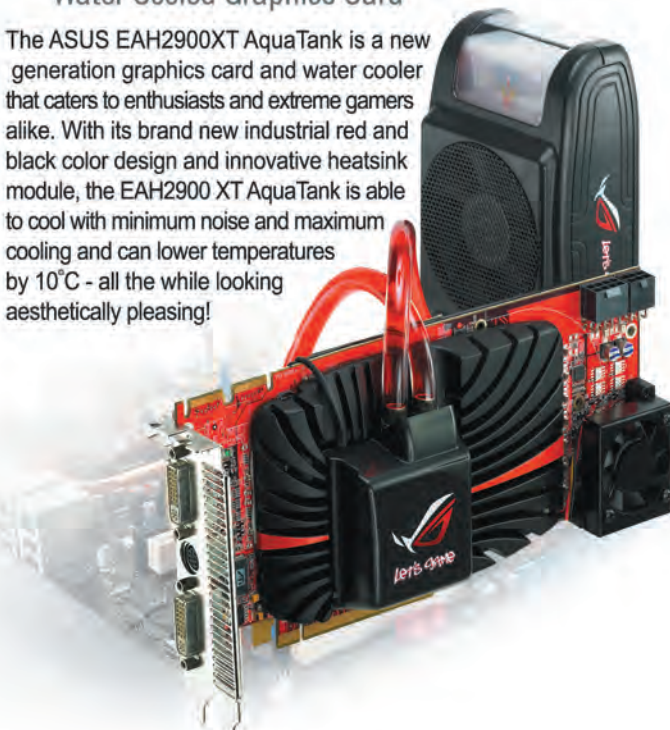
The ASUS PG221 is a 22" widescreen LCD Monitor that combines stylish industrial design with great visual performance. 1680x1050 WSXGA+ resolutions and the ASUS Smart Contrast Ratio of 2000:1 are just the start of this LCD Monitor's exceptional features, as this LCD monitor also features ASUS's Color Shine and Trace Free technologies for enriched color density and saturation, clear image borders and accelerated 2ms (gray-to-gray) response time for smooth and high quality images without ghosting during gameplay. Built-in 2.1 channel speakers (10W satellite speakers and 15W ASUS Power Bass System) further allow you to experience powerful sound effects; with the option of SRS TruSurround XT™ Technology 6.1-CH stereo surround sound.



■ EAH2900XT AquaTank

Water Cooled Graphics Card

The ASUS EAH2900XT AquaTank is a new generation graphics card and water cooler that caters to enthusiasts and extreme gamers alike. With its brand new industrial red and black color design and innovative heatsink module, the EAH2900 XT AquaTank is able to cool with minimum noise and maximum cooling and can lower temperatures by 10°C - all the while looking aesthetically pleasing!



■ R.O.G. Blitz Motherboard

Radical Features for Extreme Gaming Performance


The new ASUS ROG Blitz Extreme motherboard includes exclusive features that excel in gaming performance. The Fusion Block System is a hybrid thermal design that combines ROG's renowned heatpipe design with the ability to connect to a water cooling system; and Crosslink technology utilizes a dedicated controller to optimize PCIe allocation with dual x8 lanes for unmatched graphics performance. Additionally, 2-Phase DDR and Voltminder LEDs will let you reach higher memory frequencies and enjoy better performance while prolonging power component lifespans.



■ Vento 7700 Chassis

Optimized Ventilation with Scalability and Style

The Vento 7700 chassis allows you to place every piece of extreme hardware you ever wanted into an innovative ID Design. With artistically curved lines and a blue and black UV paint coating, you can enjoy the sleek lines, bright LED lights and the Silver X-shaped frame that enhances the overall 3D look. Additionally, the unique "Magic Mask" design allows easy access to the front cover. The Vento 7700 is truly ideal for extreme gamers as it provides a perfect thermal solution and easy component installation; as well as excellent scalability with room for hardware expansion.



A receding hair line
can drive you mad




CONAN

Developer→ Nihilistic Software | Publisher→ THQ | Genre→ Action | Release→ November 2007

MEN IN SKIRTS ARE all the rage this season. We've seen Kratos flouncing around and looking fabulous in a one-piece shred-chic petticoat, while the Myrmidons of *Titan Quest* strutted a range of strategically spattered itty-bitties along the catwalks and battlefields of Ancient Greece and Hades. Not to be outdone, an ambassador has been sent from the frozen Northern realm of Cimmeria, clad in a daring ensemble of pre-stressed wolf pelt, rounded out with a complement of matching leg-warmers, a tooth necklace and one of those butch belty things strapped across his chest. Yes, the rippling stud Conan – that multifaceted man of bard's song, an erstwhile barbarian / destroyer / usurper / other hardcore occupations – is all set to

pounce onto your TV and butcher stuff for your savage delight, while simultaneously scaling the heights of video game haute couture.

At the moment, plot details are about as skimpy as Conan's togs, but they'll doubtless necessitate chopping up all sorts of monsters nicked from classical mythology on some flimsy pretext involving evil warlocks and hot babes in leather bikinis.

By all accounts, it's a mash 'n' slash *God of War* clone, only with more blood, guts, and gore than a Bathory family reunion. Armed with two swords, for example, Conan can leap forward and casually cleave the arms from a rival combatant, who will then thrash about, his outraged arteries vomiting reams of the red stuff until he falls over

dead of exsanguination. As Conan lays extra chunky waste to everything around him with an assortment of light, heavy, and grapple attacks, he'll fill up a combo meter, which in turn amplifies the smack factor. There's also an experience system of sorts in amidst all this marvellously gratuitous violence, and once Conan has grabbed enough points, he can learn new ways to bring the pain. Starting out with some 25 blood-letting manoeuvres, our Cimmerian berserker can pick up another hundred tricks during the course of the game.

THQ has already confirmed 20 or so missions spanning six different locations across the Hyborean wilderness, while promising an M-rating for naughty bits. **NAG**

Tarryn van der Byl





UNIVERSE AT WAR

Developer→ Petroglyph | Publisher→ Sega | Genre→ Strategy | Release→ Q4 2007

THE NEW GAME FROM *Empire at War* developer Petroglyph is *Universe at War*, which will feature three different alien races fighting for control over Earth and the universe. The first race is called Novus, which is probably the more technologically advanced out of the three. They rely on various upgrades to units which you, the player, can download at any time to their systems. It is essentially a network civilization and even transporting units can be done almost instantaneously via their networks by breaking them down into

nano organisms and sending them to their various structures.

The second civilization is the Masari who for all human purposes is the basis for almost every legendary and mythical creature known to man. They are a space exploring race who has visited Earth in the past and their buildings are the basis for ancient Aztec and Egyptian structures. Their units come in forms of dragons and angels and other iconic symbols in history.

The last but certainly not the weakest race is that of the Hierarchy who are

known to be the bullies of the universe. They have in the past dominated both the others and are a very mobile military civilization with walker units that look like they have been taken out of the *War of The Worlds* film.

The game is being released on both the Xbox 360 and PC and will be one of the first third party games to be interoperable between platforms. Whatever the case may be, it certainly looks like it could rival the upcoming *Starcraft 2*. **NAG**

Justin Slabbert

PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

360

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB

PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

360

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB

www.digitalplanet.co.za
0860 245 000



Gaming Hardware

Online gaming at its best ;)

NETGEAR®

Connect with Innovation™

For speed

For storage and backups

For wireless networking



**RangeMax
Next Wireless
Modem Router**

DG834N-100UKS

Due to its speed this router is perfect for online gaming.



Storage Unit

SC101TIS

Store, back-up & share music, photos, videos and files across your network.



**Wireless Ethernet
Adapter**

WGXB102IS

The ideal solution for connecting a PC, DVR, X-Box 360™, PS3™ or other game consoles wirelessly to your home network.

From: R1 644

From: R1 670

From: R1 032

R25

off any purchase

Voucher No: BFG49



www.digitalplanet.co.za
0860 245 000

* Valid until 30 September 2007. Voucher limited to one purchase per person only.
* Terms & Conditions apply. Prices subject to change without notice. E&OE

PC
PS2
PS3
PSP
XBOX
360
DS
Wii
GBA
MOB



PAINKILLER: OVERDOSE

Developer → Mindware Studios | Publisher → JoWood | Genre → Action | Release → 26 October 2007

PAINKILLER REALLY HIT THE spot for people wanting pure unadulterated demon-killing flava in their FPS stew - it was oldschool and crystalline in its approach to the genre, the proof lodged in the pudding quite firmly. So it should come as no surprise that a "sequel" is in the works, except *Overdose* isn't a sequel but a prequel to bridge the storyline (there was a story in *Painkiller*?) between the first game and the eventual sequel.

Overdose promises 6 new weapons of the demonic persuasion, more physics, more multiplayer maps and over 40 new monsters from Hell to blast back whence they came. There will also be new ginormous end-of-level bosses that made the first game such

an interesting experience.

A new character comes part and parcel and through him, players will experience the repercussions of Daniel defeating Lucifer in the original *Painkiller*. Sixteen new single-player levels, six new weapons, a reshuffled Tarot deck with new powers... but that's not all. It seems Mindware is committed to the multiplayer side of things with new stat-tracking features, game server options and other elements.

It may not be developed by the original developers, but Mindware have long since been vocal advocates and fans of *Painkiller* and seem to be quite enthusiastic about their take on the whole thing. **NAG**

Miktar "PTTTHB" Dracon



CRASH OF THE TITANS

Developer → Sierra | Publisher → Vivendi | Genre → Platformer | Release → Q3 2007

IT'S BACK TO THE Wumpa Islands, as the fourteenth instalment in the *Crash Bandicoot* series gets ready to rock 'n' roll. This time around, Doctor Neo-Cortex, professional villain and former owner of the idyllic region, has hatched yet another fiendish scheme - somehow having landed a mysterious substance called "mojo" in his nefarious clutches, he plans to mutate the hapless island inhabitants into a vast army of ruthless, unthinking automatons. Then, just to be a total bastard, he kidnaps Crash Bandicoot's sister Coco. World domination must surely be just around the corner. Cue diabolical cackling.

Unfortunately for the Doc, however, his wayward son and perennial nemesis, Crash, has also managed to harness the

occult powers of this mojo stuff. He's also been working out, because he's become decidedly brawny since his last appearance in *Crash Twinsanity*. Once Crash has knocked the stuffing out of one of Cortex's unlucky recruits (now transformed into one of the game's eponymous Titans), he's free to clamber aboard the wretched creature's back and call upon his new-found mojo powers to "jack" or take temporary control of the guy (let's just gloss over the glaring moral double-standard). Having established his authority, Crash can direct his mount's movement, as well as take advantage of any special abilities it might have. This way, the grinning marsupial will pack some additional firepower, and be able to navigate previously impassable environmental obstacles.

By collecting the mojo deposits conveniently scattered around the place, Crash will unlock new combat combos, while he'll also be able to use his pal Aku Aku as a skateboard to zip over terrain, and even as a shield in some parts of the game. Hey, what are friends for? Expect all the sorts of platforming monkey business the franchise is known for, including chimney shimmies, wall running, and some giddy rope swinging.

Meanwhile, developer Radical Entertainment revealed in a recent interview that some sort of grand twist regarding evil overlord Uka Uka's relationship with Doctor Cortex and his precocious cyborg niece, Nina, will be revealed. **NAG**

Tarryn van der Byl



Samsung 932BF Monitor

Samsung 932BF Monitor
 appreciate the ultimate
 in viewing performance

**Magic Speed**

Operating at a fast response time of 2ms eliminates blurry images and ghosting; making your entertainment more entertaining. The ideal tool to compliment to your gaming, image viewing, or digital dreaming. Enjoy always having a clear picture of what you want to see. Fast image processing enables vivid precision quality on digital screens whilst viewing movies and games. The super fast response time produces exceptionally clear digital images with no after images or trace effects.

**Magic Color**

As if by magic, enjoy vibrant colours. Samsung's Magic Color chip really is what its name suggests. With colour tone control, gamma control and intelligent colour enhancement, colours instantly appear vividly real.

**Magic Tune**

Magic tune software enables you to control brightness, contrast and colour levels by the simple clicks of a mouse. Nothing could more conveniently optimize the way you interface with your computer.

**Magic Bright II**

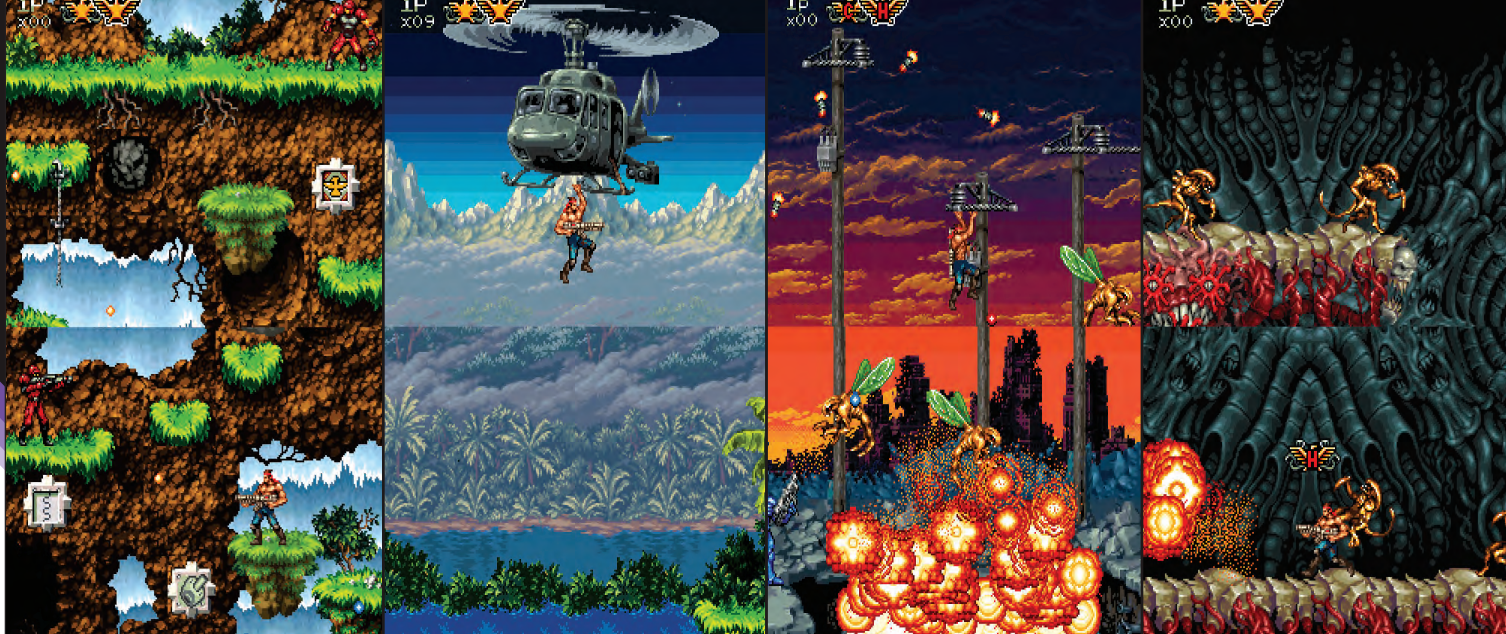
Changing the way you view separate images has never been simpler. Select the best mode to meet your viewing environment needs. Text, Internet, Game, Sports and Movie modes are provided. Each can be easily accessed by using the Magic Bright II button.

Distributed by:



SAHARA
 THE ULTIMATE IN PCs





CONTRA 4

Developer→ Konami | Publisher→ Konami Digital Entertainment | Genre→ Platformer | Release→ TBA

MAY I JUST TAKE this moment to say, it's about damn time Konami. *Contra 4* (tentative title) takes place two years after *Contra III: The Alien Wars* and three years before *Contra: Hard Corps*, but none of that matters. What matters, is that the game is finally going back to its 2D side-scrolling roots. While the top-down semi-3D *NeoContra* on PS2 was indeed a blast (and contains the best videogame ending of all time), it just wasn't *Contra* in anything but the name and the fact that all you really

wanted was the Spread Shot.

Contra 4 will appear exclusively on the Nintendo DS and uses both screens to show you the action. A new grappling hook has been introduced which lets you move to the top screen and generally swing around, but the controls themselves are a near exact copy of those found in *Contra III* complete with the Dual Weapon system which lets you store a backup weapon you can switch to at any time. Having two weapons of the same type upgrades your

firepower even further.

There will be six stages and three 3D "base" stages that pay homage to the original *Contra*, *Super C* and *Contra III*. There are four playable characters planned (although they are purely aesthetic) and Konami has already confirmed 2-player ad-hoc wireless play but have yet to confirm if there will be DS Download play to allow two people to play off one cartridge. **NAG**

Miktar "Hard Corps" Dracon



JENGA

Developer→ Atomic Planet | Publisher→ Atari | Genre→ Party | Release→ November 2007

YES, THAT'S RIGHT - that game you only ever seem to remember that you own when you're bordering on paralytically drunk is wending its way to your nearest Nintendo Wii or DS. Hey, you'll probably still wake up with history's most excruciating hangover, but at least you won't be bristling with splinters.

The precarious touch 'n' tug gameplay has, of course, been mapped to the Wii's ingenious little Remote and the DS's stylus. Just as with its real life counterparts, you'll need to maintain a steady hand to wriggle the virtual blocks from their moorings and place them on top of an increasingly wobbly tower.

In addition to the vanilla *Jenga* gameplay we all know and apparently undervalue, Atari

is packing in some optional enhancements. There are, for example, several different block materials to choose from, which affect their handling - steel blocks are heavy, ice blocks are slippery, that sort of thing. You'll also be able to choose from various arenas, including jungles, space stations, castles, and volcanoes. Each environment, furthermore, features its own themed hazards - conducting your session in outer space will mean compensating for an alarming lack of gravity, for example, while the jungle is teeming with rampaging dinosaurs whose pea-brained thumping about will shake your tower's foundations. **NAG**

Tarryn van der Byl



PC
PS2
PS3
PSP
XBOX
360
DS
Wii
GBA
MOB

LG recommends Windows Vista™ Business



Pitch Perfect



CI EXPRESS DUAL

10.6" Widescreen
Ultra Slim Convertible Tablet PC

ZI PRO EXPRESS DUAL

12.1" Widescreen
Multimedia Powerhouse

SI PRO EXPRESS DUAL

15.4" Widescreen
smART Entertainer

TI EXPRESS DUAL

14" Widescreen
Ultra Slim Entertainer

AI EXPRESS DUAL

10.6" Widescreen
Ultra Portable Entertainer

Powered by Intel® Centrino® Duo Processor Technology, based on Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor.



Available from - Bethesda Computers: +27 (0)12 348 1116 www.bethesda.co.za, Dion: www.dion.co.za, Game: www.game.co.za, Pinnacle Micro: +27 (0)11 265 3000 www.pinnacle.co.za, Rectron: +27 (0)11 203 1000 www.rectron.net, TVR Computers: +27 (0)11 807 1390 www.tvr.co.za.

Celeron, Celeron Inside, Centrino, Core Inside, Intel, Intel Core, Intel Inside, Intel SpeedStep, Intel Viv, Intel Xeon, Itanium, Itanium Inside, Pentium, Pentium Inside, the Centrino logo, the Intel logo and the Intel Inside logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries.



The fireplace malfunctioned. Badly.



WORLD OF WARCRAFT: WRATH OF THE LICH KING

Developer→ Blizzard | Publisher→ Vivendi | Genre→ MMO | Release→ TBA

WASN'T THE LAST WOW expansion supposed to be, well, the last one? That was probably just a rumor or Blizzard quickly changed its mind when it saw how equally quickly *WOW* users ground their way through *Burning Crusade*. Thus a second expansion beckons to take players to the frozen wastelands of the North, where the Lich King of *Warcraft 3: Frozen Throne* fame resides, telling the undead what to do and uncomfortable shifting his weight on what must be one hell of a cold throne. But *Wrath of the Lich King* is not just an excuse to go trample through some snow and

reach level 80. The expansion will introduce the game's first hero class, namely the cool-sounding Death Knight. This will be a high-level character out of the box, though certain game requirements need to be met first (presumably reaching a high level with a previous character and finishing certain quests). Players will also be able to customize their characters a tad more with new hairstyles and dances. Yes, dances, so get ready for more silly *WOW* user movies. Siege weapons and destructible buildings will debut as well, plus a new profession joins to entice the working classes. Called Inscription, it will

let players permanently enhance spells and so forth.

The timing could not be more prudent, because despite Blizzard's claims of 9 million subscribers (more aptly, 9 million units of the game has been sold) *WOW* has been experiencing a steady decline in user figures and activities. If anything, the expansion should probably aspire for an even higher level cap (between 90 and 100), but the new tweaks and additions should keep fans happy, especially now that they can get their groove on with a few more animations. **NAG**

James Francis



RISE OF THE ARGONAUTS

Developer→ Liquid Entertainment | Publisher→ Codemasters | Genre→ Action | Release→ 2008

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD the Greek myth about Jason and the Argonauts? Well, if you haven't, then get ready to experience it like no one else has been able to before. The basic gist of the story is that Jason is searching for a golden fleece in an attempt to stop his uncle from killing him. However, the guys at Liquid Entertainment have decided on a fresh spin on the game in which you are still searching for the Golden Fleece, but this time it is to restore life to your dead wife who was murdered on your wedding day. Besides this

however, the story takes place in more or less the same way as the myth and players will get to experience the ship known as Argos and fight alongside its Argonauts. The ship is a very crucial part of the game as it is the only means of travelling between the various islands that make up the game universe. There will be fifteen of these islands in total. It is also an ever evolving ship in which blacksmiths and priests will come aboard to aid Jason in his quest.

Of course, like any good RPG, there will

be companions that help Jason out and it is said that Hercules and even Achilles will be available to group with. Unfortunately the rest is still speculation. The gameplay itself is also mostly speculative at this point but from what could be seen by the videos, it looks similar to that of *Neverwinter Nights* albeit it a more Greek mythological approach. Whatever the case may be, this game looks to be a solid title to aid us in the wait for *Diablo 3*. **NAG**

Justin Slabbert



ULTIMATE CHOICE FOR GAMERS & OVERCLOCKERS



PC3 12800 DDR3 1600MHz 2*1GB 7-7-7-21
128*8 1.75 ~ 1.85V
TXD32048M1600HC7DC



PC8500 DDR2
1066MHz 2*1GB 5-5-5-15 64*8 2.3V
~ 2.4V TXDD2048M800HC4DC-D



Capacities*: 512MB, 1GB, 2GB, 4GB, 8GB
Color: Red, Black, White, Blue, Green, Metallic
Transfer Rate: Transfer rate up to 12~20MB/Sec,
read up to 3~10MB/Sec

Distributed By: Comstar Technologies Pty Ltd
Unit09, Stanford Business Park, Midrand, South Africa.
Tel: +27 11 314 5812, Fax: +27 11 314 5813
Email: sales@comstarsa.co.za, Web: www.comstarsa.co.za



PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

360

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB

GEARS OF WAR

Developer→ Epic | Publisher→ Microsoft | Genre→ Action | Release→ Q4 2007

GEARS OF WAR IS finally coming out on the PC after a year of wooing 360 fans around the world. And what a wait it has been for some. Many ardent PC players that never were able to play the 360 version will be happy to know that while it is really just a port across, it also adds new missions to the campaign and two new multiplayer levels. What was once just a cinematic creature known as the Brumak, aka '40 feet of guns, armour and teeth, will now be a boss in which players must defeat during the extra playable levels that have been added.

There will also be a new King of the Hill game type for the multiplayer community which will be similar to Annex, but once the objectives have been obtained they must be held and enemies must be executed with care.

For those of you who are not familiar with the series, *Gears of War* takes place in a war torn universe where humans are fighting a threat known as the Locusts. As the player, you assume the role of Marcus Fenix, a overly muscular man with a love for big guns. It is a squad-based game in which players must work closely with other characters to accomplish the various objectives while utilising strategies like object cover for armour.

The game will also be able to run on both XP and Vista so that the broadest markets can still be met. Unfortunately, to see what the game can really look like though, one must have an extremely powerful system and online play will only be through the infamous Windows Live service. **NAG**

Justin Slabbert

Hide and seek on Pro level



SPACE SIEGE

Developer→ Gas Powered Games | Publisher→ Sega | Genre→ RPG | Release→ Q1 2008

THE FATE OF HUMANITY rests in your hands! When aliens attack Earth, five colony ships try to escape. Only one manages to and the Armstrong is left to survive on its own out in space. But the alien menace is still around and it lands on the shoulders of Seth Walker and his robot side-kick to protect the innocent and kill plenty of alien bugs. Upgrade equipment, buy new hardware, kill monsters and prepare to do a lot of dungeon crawling, even though you are on a vast space ship.

If you are sharper than us, you would have wondered if this has anything to do with *Dungeon Siege*. You'd be right – *Space Siege* is

the next game in Chris Taylor and Gas Powered Works' *Dungeon Siege* series, though the name is really for spiritual succession. *Space Siege* aims to be a much more hands-on game, allowing Seth to duck, dodge, donner and dive as he takes on alien enemies. But the fundamentals, such as buying plenty of gear and weapons, remain intact. Seth will eventually also get the option to install cybernetic upgrades, while his HR-V robot can be improved as well.

But many questions remain unanswered, like whether *Space Siege* will have its own awesome orchestral theme song that sweeps you into an atmosphere of adventure and

relentless hacking and slashing (or in this case shooting and grenading). Fortunately the absolute staple of any *Siege* title, four-player co-op multiplayer, is part of the package. The original game awed everyone with its packmules and large, streaming levels, something we're going to assume will be in the game again, while obviously the series has undergone a huge graphical upgrade. Sure, the initial screens look a bit bland, but just cast your mind back to the hills and valleys of Ehb... oh yes, *Space Siege* is going to rock! **NAG**

James Francis

SURVIVAL OF THE FASTEST

Carve up the competition
in brutal six-car battles
on fully deforming tracks.



"Forget MotorStorm and McRae, this is the next-gen off-road racer that reminds you why you bought a PS3 in the first place."

PSW

SEGA RALLY™

RALLY RACING UNLEASHED
28th SEPTEMBER



www.pegi.info



PLAYSTATION 3 PSP



ask
about
games
.com

SRS
SEGA RACING STUDIO



BUGBEAR
ENTERTAINMENT

SEGA®

www.sega.co.uk

© SEGA. SEGA, the SEGA logo and SEGA Rally are either registered trade marks or trade marks of SEGA Corporation. All rights reserved. All trademarks used herein are under license from their respective owners. Ford Oval and nameplates are registered trademarks owned and licensed by Ford Motor Company. Manufactured by SEGA. www.ford.com. The Mobil logo and the flying horse design are trademarks of the Exxon Mobil Oil Corporation or one of its subsidiaries. Manufactured and distributed by SEGA with kind consent of SKODA AUTO a.s. (www.skoda-auto.com). Copyright and reproduction rights to the trademark, samples, and models granted by SKODA AUTO a.s. All rights reserved. "PS3", "PSP" and "UMD" are trademarks or registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox Live, and the Xbox, Xbox 360, and Xbox Live logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries. All rights reserved.

The background of the top half of the page is a dynamic Warhammer 40,000 illustration. It depicts a large, dark, armored figure, likely a Space Marine, in the center. Above them, two smaller, more mechanized figures are firing blue energy beams. The scene is set against a backdrop of green and yellow light, with a bright orange and red energy source visible on the right side. The overall tone is intense and action-packed.

TABULA RASA

REMEMBER
EARTH!

STAND AND FIGHT!



THE HOMEWORLD OF HUMANITY IS GONE DECIMATED BY THE INVADING RANE FORCES

THOSE OF US CHOSEN TO FIGHT FOR OUR FUTURE MUST NOW
BAND TOGETHER, LEARN THE SECRETS OF THE LOGOS AND PREPARE
TO RISE UP IN DEFLANCE OF THE RANE. WE WILL THROW OFF
OUR OPPRESSORS AND TAKE BACK THE GALAXY - ONE PLANET AT A TIME

YOU ARE NEEDED. YOU HAVE A PURPOSE.

IT HAS BEEN EXACTLY ten years since Richard Garriott defined what would become the foundation of the MMO genre through his massively-multiplayer alternate reality, Ultima Online. Not only did Ultima Online pave the way and set the benchmark for the MMO genre, it remains perhaps the only true MMORPG ever conceived due to the sheer richness of choice it offered players in terms of skills, professions and roles a player could assume in its vibrant and deep world.

Now, Garriott returns to the MMO genre with Tabula Rasa, a game he hopes will evolve the

genre as no other MMO has.

Tabula Rasa features a rich storyline, immersive environments and a persistent plot. Using the power of "Logos", an alien language, players will be able to harness the very fabric of the cosmos to heal or attack, destroy or save. Ethical parables will confront players with moral and ethical choices that have real impact, while the fast-paced redefined combat system hopes to open the genre up to more players by representing your actions in a familiar, immediate way. Integrated Voice-over-IP lets you communicate with your

teammates in real-time to coordinate attacks or strategies and the ability to clone yourself lets you try out new class configurations without starting from scratch.

Can Tabula Rasa bring much-needed progression to the rapidly expanding yet ultimately stagnant MMO genre? NAG Magazine got the rare honour of sitting down with Richard Garriott and his long-time partner-in-crime and cohort Starr Long, the duo affectionately known to Ultima fans as Lord British and Lord Blackthorn, to ask them about what they envision for Tabula Rasa.

INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD GARRIOTT AND STARR LONG



Miktar: First let me say it's a great honour to be here, I've been a huge Ultima fan since the start of my gaming gig and if I had to go back in time and tell myself that one day I'd be interviewing Richard Garriott I'd have called myself a liar. This is a very surreal, in a way.

Richard Garriott: Thank you, I very much appreciate the compliment. As I'm sure you can understand, I feel I've had a very fortunate tenure in this business, having had the opportunity to get in at such a ground floor and ride along with the growth of this amazing industry. I enjoy it myself.

Miktar: I'll have to admit I have not played Tabula Rasa yet, my beta keys are still en route, so all my questions today are based entirely on only research and for that I apologize.

Richard Garriott: Not a problem, we're just now at the point in the product life-cycle where we are ready to let the press in to have professional opinions, you might say.

Miktar: The general public opinions for Tabula Rasa have been very positive so far, I'm surprised to see.

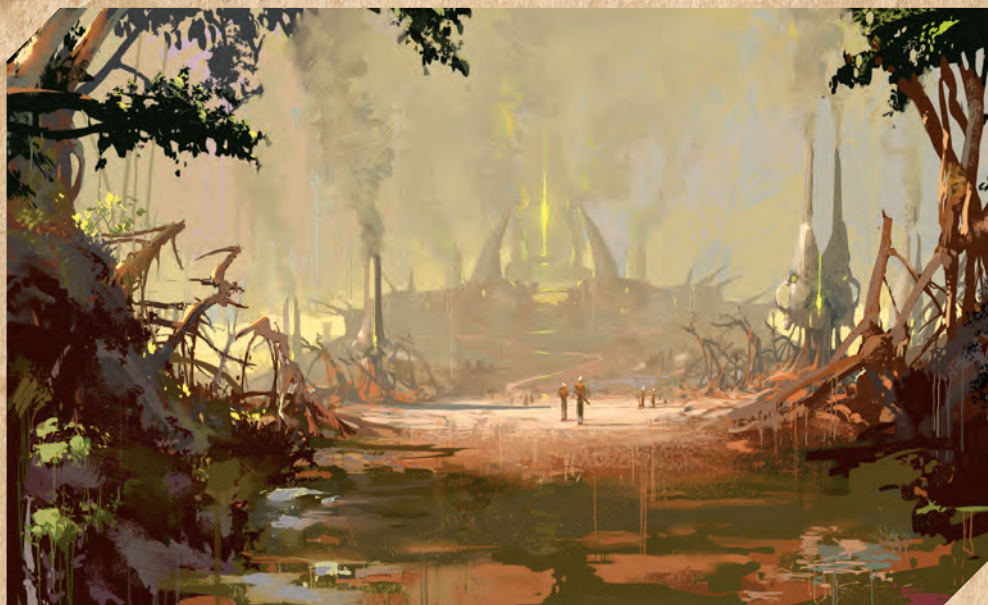
Richard Garriott: We also have been very, very pleased with the public perception that we've been having. As I'm sure you're aware, we've been working on this game for quite a few years now, so it's a combination of excitement and trepidation with which we're finally letting people in and we're overjoyed with the response we're getting so far.

Miktar: With the current deluge of fantasy MMOs I'm quite looking forward to the Sci-Fi theme of Tabula Rasa myself.

Richard Garriott: It's funny you should mention that - our real motivation for doing something other than historical fantasy, to be frank, was just because we had spent decades doing nothing but historical fantasy ourselves, and so our real break from fantasy is really just to give ourselves a break. However, I also think it just happens to be quite timely in the marketplace in that now it really does appear that there is a real lack of people trying anything outside that tried-and-true standard.

Miktar: Personally, what has you most excited about Tabula Rasa?

Richard Garriott: In the Ultima series, it was always some aspect of the fictional reality that got me personally most excited and I think we've done a great job on that in Tabula Rasa. Compared to the Ultima series, this is the first time that we've really done things like the combat system, which I think is the most accessible part of our game and the part I enjoy playing, personally, the most - our fast paced combat system. It feels like you're really involved in the world, unlike the kind of turn-based system you see in most MMOs. I see Starr Long has just joined us.



Miktar: They mythical "Lord Blackthorne" arrives.

Starr Long: *laughs* Exactly! Except I cannot use that title anymore.

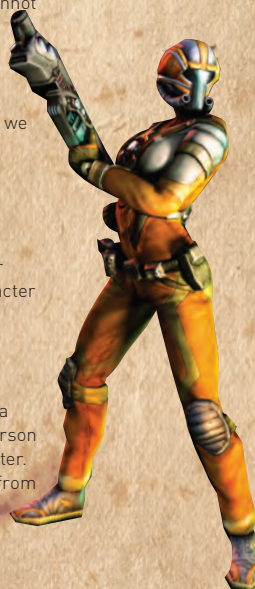
Miktar: It's okay, I won't tell.

Richard Garriott: Around the office here, we call him "Dark Starr".

Miktar: Are you both going to be playing Tabula Rasa, perhaps incognito?

Starr Long: *laughs* Yes, although so far only Richard has gotten his custom character built.

Richard Garriott: The "General British" character will always be me when I play, role-played so not an NPC, and the "Serra Morrison" character we also have one person here who will be role-playing that character. You may recognize Serra has the female from all our promotional material.



Miktar: I personally feel that's quite a nice touch - too many MMOs these days seem to be 100% NPC characters with no actual developer involvement.

Richard Garriott: It's interesting, there is a lot of debate in the community, the game master and developer community, as to the pros and cons of having someone play "live" as I did with the Lord British character in Ultima Online. The contrarians would say things like, "Well hey, that Lord British - you, Richard Garriott - are going to play so rarely, and the statistical number of people you're going to meet online is so low, even if you spend all day every day attempting it, that it'll be really cool for the small fraction of people that get to see it but could in theory be frustrating for those who miss out". The view that I've had, is that because it really does give those people who I casually get the chance to play with, clearly lets them know that we the developers are in there with them, playing with them, listening to their concerns, seeing how they play, playing the game alongside them, helping to



develop the same opinions - it just gives them a great sense of confidence that we're really working on this world for them. I think that it really clearly states the connection that we have with the player base.

Miktar: What are your thoughts on Auto Assault, another MMO in the NC Soft stable, recently announcing that they would be ending their service due to low player participation?

Richard Garriott: One of the hallmarks of NC Soft, is that we are genre, platform and play style agnostic as a company - in other words, we want to try as many experiments as possible. We think that only by taking big risks, do you get the chance to have big successes. And that occasionally means that you're trying things that don't work. While I think Auto Assault did some things really fabulously, we think that there are areas where it just very obviously didn't click with the broad market that these things need to reach to sustain themselves.

Tabula Rasa, while fast paced as a feel, underneath that surface feeling of tension, there is a full-fledged very familiar role-playing game where it's clearly my character's attributes and equipment, in a probabilities game, against my opponent's attributes and equipment. And that allows us to still clearly appeal to the very central core of role-playing games, while at the same time, providing a high sense of tension which I think is actually missing in a lot of pen-and-paper role-playing games or these turn-based MMOs you see everyone else generating.

Miktar: What are the aspects you feel Tabula Rasa is really pushing the boundaries on in terms of the MMO genre?

Starr Long: I think there is a variety of places where we feel like we're helping evolve the genre a little bit. One that we're really excited about is how the character class system works. If you look at most role-playing games and online games, MMOs especially, one of the very first things you do is you pick your character class - and that's before you've even played the game, you don't even know which one of those classes is going to be your favorite. The usual behaviour that we see is you play one of those classes for a while, then you figure out "Oh, I wanna try one of these other classes" and at that point you start at zero. You start the game over again, and you play the same content again, just so you can experience those other character classes. In contrast, in Tabula Rasa, the very first thing you do is not pick your character class, everyone is the same character class, a recruit, and that recruit is basically a soldier with some powers like shooting lightning from your fist and some armour skills - it's not till level five where you have to make a class choice, the first branch in our character class tree. Your decision at that point is "do I wanna be a soldier or a specialist", the soldier is about shooting stuff and the specialist is more of a support role, like a medic, engineer

type. And then again at further levels, you make further choices that become more and more specialized over time. Every time you're making one of these decisions about what character class you wanna play, you are doing it in an informed manner. You know what you like, and don't like. What's really unique about Tabula Rasa, is at any time you can create a clone of your character, and that clone is an exact copy of that character, it's a save-game if you will, and you can load up that clone and create a new character from that clone at whatever level that clone is and that allows you to explore all the different character

classes in the game without ever having to start at level zero.

And so, that's one we're especially excited about, but there are other fronts as well, like the Dynamic Battlefield. In most games, the creatures just sort of stand around and wait for you to kill them, they don't really do anything or have any perceived purpose and the world therefor feels a little contrived. As part of our effort to increase the immersion, our fiction is that: tomorrow the Bane invade earth, wipe us all out and we're scattered to various planets across the galaxy trying to win a war. So there's a war supposed to be happening and we took our clue from a lot of the story-driven shooters like Medal of Honor and Call of Duty where they did a really great job of taking computer-controlled characters and setting them up in scenes like the D-Day beach invasion where it felt like there was a war, that they were fighting for each other, moving through the territory... so we implemented that in Tabula Rasa so that the NPCs are doing things.

They're fighting each other to the point where they'll even take territory from each other, and it's all linked to the system of control points and these control points are linked to other variables in the environment like what missions are available, where I can re-spawn when I die, what shopkeepers I can buy things from, crafting stations, waypoint teleporters that I can use... So what can happen is you run into a base and you get a series of missions from the mission



RICHARD GARRIOTT

Richard "Lord British" Garriott remains one of the most well-known game designers of our time. As the founder of Origin Systems and the creator of the Ultima series, he has been a cornerstone contributor to the growth gaming industry. Known for eccentricity, Garriott has visited Antarctica, the bottom of the ocean in a research submarine and built his own castle on a cliff, complete with a moat, dungeons and a secret underground passage to the foot of the rock.

His famous nickname, "Lord British" was assigned to him by older students in high school.

"I've got this name since my high-school days. Some older students were giving nicknames to the younger ones. I was called Lord British because they claimed that I had a British accent."

His most notable games include Akalabeth: World of Doom (1980), Ultima (1981), Crusader: No Remorse (1995), BioForge (1995) and Ultima Online (1997).



commander and you'll leave the base to complete those, come back and while you were gone, the base was overrun by the enemy and they now control the base. If you want to finish that series of missions, you're going to have to work with other players to take that base back or wait for the computer-controlled characters to take that base back.

What all this ends up doing is every time you log into one of these maps with these control points on it things are slightly different, depending on where the state of the war is at any given time and the players can influence or not influence as they want. It creates a much more dynamic, immersive playspace than we've seen in most MMOs today.

There are other elements we're quite proud of that come into play during combat, such as your position on the battlefield, if you're crouching or not, whether your running or not - the environment becomes relevant to combat even though it's an RPG.

Sorry I know I'm talking a lot, but the last bit we think we're taking it a little bit further is how we're integrating story into the game. In most games when you look at the way the story unfolds or doesn't, you'd basically get some missions that are checklists - collect a certain number of items or go talk to these people and come back here. While we do have lots of those quests and it will be very familiar to people who have played these kind of games before, every now and then we also have quests we like to call "ethical parables".

The ethical parables are situations where a player will come up to a mission and at first it'll seem pretty straightforward, like feeding a prisoner. You start feeding the prisoner and he starts talking to you, starts telling you about himself and starts to give you some intelligence about the enemy but then you find out that they're interrogating this prisoner when you're not around and forcing information out of him and then you're given an assignment to poison that prisoner, presenting you a sort of ethical dilemma - do you follow your orders, morally right or wrong, but you're also getting valuable information out of this prisoner and depending on what choice the player makes that'll unlock a whole series of missions or prevent you from completing a certain set of missions. So the outcomes will be unexpected for the players and hopefully teach them a little lesson: that there isn't always necessarily a right or wrong choice.

Richard Garriott: We think these are evolutionary steps forward in the MMO genre, these key features that are I think particularly successful in Tabula Rasa. I'm willing to actually state that I think if these features are successful enough, that not only are they going to help ensure that Tabula Rasa is highly successful but I believe that a lot of these innovations are the kind of innovations that the MMO genre has needed, so to speak, and that a lot of future MMOs will rip on these kinds of features. Not only will we make improvements to it but I believe you'll see similar kinds of features be evolved in our competitors games as well.

Miktar: A lot of people find the MMO genre



very daunting. How will Tabula Rasa usher in new players?

Richard Garriott: I agree with that, that the vast majority of MMOs are daunting to sit down and decide to play. There's so much to learn, just to get over the hurdle of playing at all. Living in a virtual world is very daunting because a lot of them are set up not just to support the hardcore gamers, but also the ultra-hardcore gamers in the sense of people who are willing to devote enormous amounts of time to these games to join the endless level-grind just to keep up with their friends who are on the endless level-grind. And most MMOs, if anything, don't support or even shun the casual gamers; people who just play periodically or for short periods of time, and definitely don't want to get into the race and still want to be able to play with their friends even if their friends play twice as frequently.

I think that Tabula Rasa is far, far better than most MMOs at supporting people, for a couple of reasons. One, is that the game is just a lot easier to get into and play because we have a very different interface style than a lot of MMOs - we just have left-mouse-button fires your weapon, right-mouse-button fires your special ability and so your ability to just get into the game, walk around and engage opponents is quite straightforward. Then in addition, Tabula Rasa is not about level-grinding. Our game is about exploring and puzzle-solving and story-content consumption. So your friend, who only plays half as often as you do, and therefore is only

half as far along in the game as you are, you can still step back and play with them or they can step up and play with you, and since level is not the focus of our gameplay, even when you are substantially different in level, you can still find areas to explore or creatures to face that are relevant to both of your skill-levels so you can feel very accomplished, unlike most other MMOs.

Starr Long: Just to chime in: I think the user interface element can't be over-emphasized, that we really spent a lot of time streamlining the interface as much as possible, where even if you just look at a screenshot of our game with the interface on, you can see that there's just a lot less going on there. You're not overwhelmed with information. Our control scheme, I would compare it more to something simpler like a shooter or a console game, more than a traditional MMO. Our class system also helps, in that you don't need to know much about the game to start playing, you just jump in and start clicking around.

Miktar: I know you both have done hundreds of interviews about Tabula Rasa so far. What do you feel is an important question that has yet to be asked about Tabula Rasa? Something that you particularly want to tell people, but doesn't come up during interviews?

Richard Garriott: One that I feel comes up more rarely, has to do with the evolution of story depth and how we play out story in an



STARR LONG

Along with Richard Garriott, Starr Long was the original Project Director for Ultima Online as well as the inspiration for the game's "Lord Blackthorn" character. Long worked his way up in the industry starting as a temp employee in Quality Assurance on titles such as Wing Commander 3, quickly moving to lead positions on titles such as BioForge and Ultima VIII.

During his time at Origin, Long was praised for excellent performance and received awards like "Most Valuable Player", "Manager of the Year" and "Firefighter of the Year".

Games crediting Starr Long include Wing Commander: Privateer (1993), Ultima Underworld II: Labyrinth of Worlds (1993), Ultima VIII: Pagan (1994) as well as Ultima Online (1997).

MMO setting. On the surface we talk about how this is more like a solo-player game. We've got a mixture of MMO spaces, shared maps that we often refer to as the Dynamic Battlefield, the private instanced spaces, where we make the game feel more like a solo-player game. But it's fairly uncommon for people to delve into the trickiness of doing that. It actually turns out that it's a hard balance to strike, to find a way to do story-telling in an MMO setting. I look back and contrast MMO to solo-player games, and I felt that in 20 years of doing solo-player Ultimas before doing Ultima Online, we had become what I would describe as "marginally competent" interactive storytellers. And as I'm sure you're familiar with, telling a story in an interactive setting is radically harder than telling a story than, say, in a book, where you have complete control over a linear narrative. After 20 years, we were beginning to get a slight competency at it, and then we started this new thing called "Massively Multiplayer" games, and all of the skill of our industry basically disappeared because in an Massively Multiplayer setting, suddenly none of us had the answers on how to do the storytelling. A vast majority of the MMOs basically answered this problem by just not doing story at all.

Most MMOs, nobody ever actually wins and anything you accomplish is really just the checklist, a little milestone checklist, along a simple thread that you're following and so is everybody else. There's really never any change that takes place in the world. We

really set out to try and solve that problem with Tabula Rasa - just because we're in an MMO setting doesn't mean it's not a worthy goal. The reason why we think we can do it in our instanced spaces, goes back to when you think about buying a solo-player Ultima, you feel like you're the great hero that saved the world, in spite of the fact that there are millions of other people playing who also think that, but since they're privately at home in their own house, you don't even seem to mind calling them on the phone to see how they accomplished it. The reason why I think it doesn't bother you, is because they're not in your space, running across the finish line in front of you.

We use our instanced spaces to basically retool the game into what feels more like a solo-player game that you can play with your friends, but then we do very elaborate story-telling and puzzle solving and climatic events that I think will work very successfully.

Miktar: Would you say Tabula Rasa has a "definite" ending that you may expand upon with expansion packs or such?

Richard Garriott: That's an interesting question, because anything you create in an MMO, there's also lots of different ways that people will play it - there are people who just really want to explore all the systems and character classes and get their clones up to level 50 in all 8 of our principle lines of development, there are explorers who just want to go out and

see everything there is to see in the game, and those who I think just want to solve the plot threads and the main plot thread definitely does have a beginning and end, and like you have noted, that is what we will most likely expand with expansion missions, but there are all kinds of others areas of exploration, like PvP that can be done from individuals up to groups of players, the class-trees, the systems that we have coming online in the future where as we have people reach level 50 we have other kinds of "Elder" content to provide them, so there's others ways that we'll keep people entertained and busy. But from a plot standpoint, there's no question that each of our main plot sections has a classic beginning, middle and end and then we move you on to the next plot segment.

Miktar: On the subject of PvP, will the PvP itself have any kind of bearing on the overall world itself (such as how Guild Wars ties it's PvP results into unlocking areas in the PvE part of the game)?

Starr Long: For us it's really a Group vs Group kind of thing, and we've framed it in the game much how there's boxing matches inside the military - in a future where just about any wound can be healed and people can be resurrected or cloned made from them, that even up to "fatal" wounds are the equivalent of a boxing match or a football game, and so for us the military organization looks the other way and allows players to



spar with each other up to a "deadly" level, as a tension relief valve. There's factions within humanity who believe that the war should be executed in different ways and the way they settle their differences is PvP. But as far as it effecting the world, it's not part of the main plot or anything like that. There are plans for expanding upon the impact PvP will have upon the environment, but those won't be until we do sort of our next expansion.

Miktar: What do you envision for the PvP itself, if I have to make a reference to Guild Wars which treats its PvP as a competitive world-wide event, do you think Tabula Rasa will follow suit?

Starr Long: Ours will definitely be a competition, you'll be able to go to a web page and see global rankings, which clan has won the most wars, which player has won the most duels, and actually over time we'll be adding to that. Fun stuff, like wagering over the outcome of these wars, within the game clans will be able to wager and bet loot or money.

Richard Garriott: Fictionally we've set it up for it also. One of the ways we've gotten these ethical parables into the game, and it has a side-effect of setting up for player faction conflicts, is to create a world that is rich in the same way that our real world is rich, with a diversity of civilizations or portions of civilizations that while all might imagine themselves as righteous and good, have very clear historical and current environmental conditions that make the way that they would pursue goals very different.

Just like in the real world, most every European and of course countries in Southern Africa and America all would call themselves as, and would make good cases for, calling themselves righteous, good, governing bodies with positive-meaning people in it yet still there are substantial differences between these countries that generally get along, that occasionally get all the way to the point of aggression. And the same thing is true in the world of Tabula Rasa, as we have it set up. The humans, and a lot of these other sentient races we work with, while all resisting this evil alien horde known as the Bane that's clearly bent on killing us all off, there's striking differences in approach and attitude that commonly even during our game erupt into conflict between what would otherwise be allies.

And because of that, that sets us up to let players have differences of opinion too.

Miktar: I've noticed that when asked about the future of MMOs, you often talk about MMOs as being in their infancy. Where do you believe MMOs should go from here if the genre wants to grow and expand?

Richard Garriott: I would actually say that not only is the genre in its infancy, but I would say that previous to Tabula Rasa they've been somewhat stagnant which I know is fairly critical but I'm honestly pretty critical with the tenures of MMOs we've brought to bear so far. One of the problems that everybody including ourselves faces, is just how long

these take to develop. Even though I'm very critical, I'm also very understanding on one level of the problems because we experience it ourselves - these take a long time, cost an enormous amount of money so it's understandable that every developer and publisher is going to be incredibly risk-averse. But the results of that are that if you look at the entire history of the genre, of course MMOs have existed as long as computers have existed, but Ultima Online does still hold a very special place as the first big-budget, big-success - they brought in hundreds of thousands of people at a time into playing one of these online worlds. Then, if you include Everquest in what I call the beginning of this first generation, and Everquest is developed independently of Ultima Online and came out shortly afterwards so it wasn't really effected by Ultima Online very much, but almost every other MMO since then can look at its feature set and I think can be pretty easily described as a derivative of something between Ultima Online and Everquest. They use almost all of the exact same game mechanics and features to technological problems. One of the case studies for me is something like combat - combat in an MMO is really tricky because you've got people distributed all over the world connected to the server that has to find some fair way to say who got to hit who in what order for how much damage and who's going to win, and so that the easiest way to solve that 10 years ago was to basically let the

server take over and run the timing tick as to when the cycle of combat took place and so therefor every other MMO that has followed that pattern has this what I call turn-based combat pattern where you highlight an opponent and there's just basically a tick that goes by and you hit them, they hit you, you hit them, they hit you and whoever does the most damage over time wins.

And that model, was the model of convenience based on our first-generation of online games. I don't by any means think it is the player's preference, that was just the simple technological solution. And so, one of the things we've done with Tabula Rasa and one of the reasons we call it Tabula Rasa was that we said "Look, we want to wipe all those features off the table, we want to start from scratch from what we think the player experience ought to be" and find the solutions that we really thought would make the best game, not get stuck in those technical hurdles that are really our problem and not the player's problem.

And as I look forward, I think that the maturation of the online game space will be slow in one side, the thing that will slow it down is the extremely slow cycle time that I was describing when I said how risk-averse people are, on the other hand the pressure to go faster is just because as a business it's the fastest growing segment by far of any segment of gaming, and so the motivation to get these things done well and right is very





high. I just think there are very few groups on the planet who have the skill to innovate like we do, and I feel extraordinarily fortunate that NC Soft has not just us, this team, but also other groups too like the ArenaNet guys who are also incredible leaders of the MMO space, as well as our Korean partners over in Sol who really understand these issues well.

Miktar: Would you say you're proud of how *Tabula Rasa* is turning out, despite the early stumbling blocks of trying to create something that appeals to both an Eastern and Western market but failed at both?

Richard Garriott: Absolutely. The great part of being part of NC Soft is that we are a long-term vision company, just like if you look back at our days at Origin I believe that Origin especially when we were an independent company absolutely felt the same way - we were long-term investors developing our own internal intellectual property for the long haul, and so it's important to take risks but when you find a difficulty or problem with one area of risks the correct thing to do is fix it and get it right, and present something when you have full confidence in it versus rushing something out the door.

Miktar: What are your thoughts in terms of the MMO genre on consoles? NC Soft recently announced they would be developing for the PlayStation 3.

Richard Garriott: We did sign with Sony to develop MMOs for the PlayStation 3, and obviously that's somewhat indicative of our corporate perspective that - as I mentioned earlier - we are platform, genre and business model agnostic. Wherever the players wish to play, we will be there trying to provide them entertainment however they would like to receive it, be it download, retail, episodic or subscription, irrespective if it's on PC or console. That being said, I think the problems for creating MMOs on PC is one set of problems, and consoles is its own set of problems and variables. I think *Tabula Rasa*, which is launching as a PC-only title, from a user-interface standpoint does have a lot overlap with what we think would make for good console play.

Starr Long: Consoles, until the last generation, really had a few big barriers for us, the biggest one being communication. The primary means of communication in games up until now, basically, was keyboard - text chat. There wasn't a viable equivalent for console until this latest generation where VoIP is becoming more and more ubiquitous. It's this latest round of consoles that, just from a technical standpoint, is making it possible for us to consider them as a platform. We're really excited about them, and most of us play as many console games as we do PC games,

so we're all just personally fans and the market is huge there.

Miktar: My final question for you: if there is one thing, something specific, that you would want to tell our readers about *Tabula Rasa*, that you really think means they should give the game their time, what would that be?

Starr Long: I'm gonna go first and mine's really simple: I really do think that they need to get rid of their preconceived notions of what an MMO is like to get into and play, because we really do offer something unique and I think overall it's a combination of both being easier to play and at the same time, almost ironically, it's also a more immersive experience that's got more depth and excitement that you've seen in an MMO to date. It's faster paced, more action, it's got a better storyline, an easier interface - again, if people have thought about playing an online game but have been intimidated or turned off, they really need to rethink what they should expect out of an MMO.

Richard Garriott: I actually think that would be the same message I would give, so Starr and I are in complete agreement. That's the one thing I hope people believe about *Tabula Rasa*, who were considering it.

Miktar: Thank you both for this opportunity, it's been a real experience and an honour. **NAG**

WHAT WE'RE PLAYING

PRINCE OF PERSIA [XBLA]

Having run through Jaffar's dungeons once more [except this time, with a re-imagined slick new paint job and shiny new control scheme courtesy of this remake on Xbox Live Arcade], we're unsure how we ever managed to even finish the original in under an hour. Even with the new controls, new moves and redefined combat system, *Prince of Persia* remains a fiendishly difficult game that has no qualms about unceremoniously depositing you at the bottom of a deep well, filled with spikes.

BOMBERMAN LIVE [XBLA]

Before deathmatch, there was *Bombmatch*. And all gamers who played *Bombmatch*, knew that it was good. Especially when it was on the Super Nintendo, with a four-player MultiTap. Many years later, *Bombberman* saw a PC release that let up to eight people *Bombmatch* over a LAN. Now, the second coming of *Bombberman* has arrived in the form of *Bombberman Live* for Xbox Live Arcade. It has all the options, all the modes, all the fun in one all-encompassing package that allows for four player local play too.

WORLD IN CONFLICT BETA [PC]

From the genius behind *Ground Control 2* comes a much more "mainstream" appeal attempt that blissfully takes everything that made *Ground Control 2* a winner, and wraps it up in a World War New package that just shines with all the polish. The beta lavished us with some online multiplayer action – everyone picking a Role, Infantry, Air, Support or Armour, and learning how to best use their limited unit sets as part of the grand battle design. It's very rock/paper/scissors in terms of unit design, but that's a good thing when done right.

SPACE FORCE - ROGUE UNIVERSE [PC]

The sun is continually rising in the East – they seem to know exactly what game genres need more love and *Space Force* is a testament to the Space Exploration and Combat genre. Now if only someone could teach the East that all games need LAN play, especially if your game is a Space Exploration and Combat game. It's got the goods, it plays well, it is fun and contains plenty of upgrading depth – it just needs a buddy on your wing, helping you take out those evil space pirates so you can buy better ships.

THREADSPACE [PC]

The greatest multiplayer game ever conceived [yet nobody is playing it except us, the developers, and the few that have tried it and enjoyed it]. *ThreadSpace*, sold exclusively (much to its chagrin) on Steam, was covered in the MMO section last month in case you missed it. We've included the offline LAN demo for it on this month's DVD so please, give it a look and be sure to run through the tutorials. If you like what you see, consider heading to Steam to make that purchase – the developers really need the support.

088



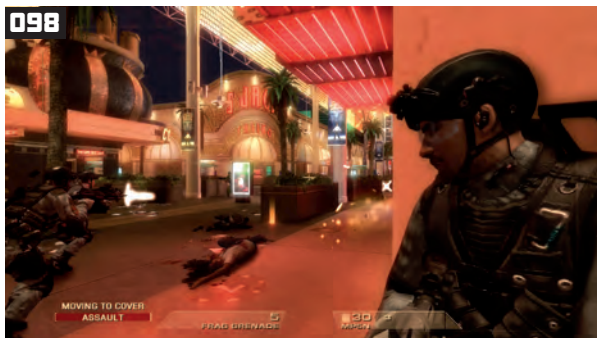
100



090



098



104



WEB SCORES

GENESIS RISING [PC]

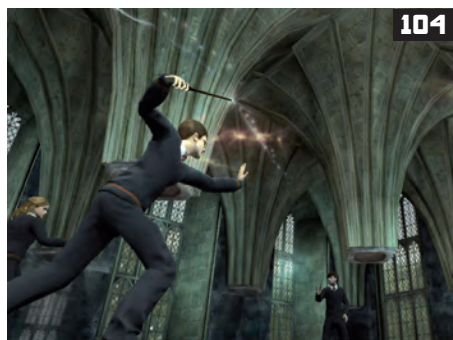
NAG	94
METACRITIC	81
GAMERANKINGS	81

PROJECT SYLPHED [360]

NAG	85
METACRITIC	72
GAMERANKINGS	73

TWO WORLDS [PC]

NAG	75
METACRITIC	74
GAMERANKINGS	77



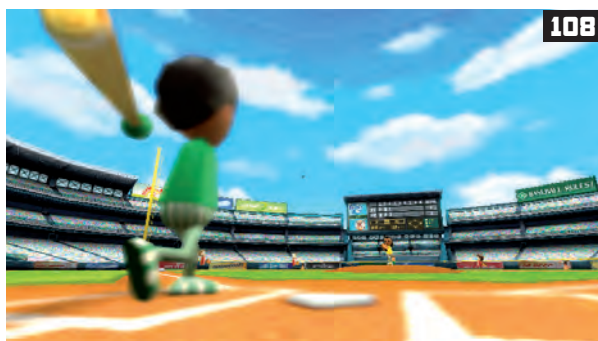
104



094



102



108



096

THE NAGSONS AND SONS

Let me tell you now an interesting story, of the NAGsons and Sons in all their glory. They're like a TV sitcom family you can pwn, As long as the magazine you buy is your own.

NAGsons and Sons.

Miktar Draconson

The zany uncle who often causes comical mishaps when he confuses the dog with the parakeet.



Toby Hudsonson

The creepy evil genius scientist and inventor who has a lab in the shack in the back yard.



Eddie Francisson

The wacky next-door neighbor who smells suspiciously of rosemary and lavender.



Justin Slabbertson

The creepy doctor-in-training that never fails to remind people of his love for train collections.



Sean Jamesson

The world-wise street-smart ex-Foreign Legion pilot that has them swooning even before touchdown.



James Francisson

The head of the house, the main man, numero uno – when he remembers who he is and what he was doing.



Adam Liebmanson

The misbegotten son of a lawyer and a priest, currently couch-surfing the biggest couch off the coast.



Tarryn van der Bylson

The hot chick of the neighborhood after a lengthily episode involving makeovers and the removing of reading glasses.



NAG would like to give a special thanks to www.simpsonsmovie.com for its awesome Simpsons Avatar creator.

HARRY POTTER [PS3]



NAG	90
METACRITIC	73
GAMERANKINGS	75

CALL OF JUAREZ [360]



NAG	91
METACRITIC	90
GAMERANKINGS	90

TRANSFORMERS [360]



NAG	49
METACRITIC	53
GAMERANKINGS	55

mmmmmm ... SHINY!

A quick guide to the NAG reviews section

PCSPEC: Will this game rape your machine, or make it fly? Check the box at the bottom right for an explanation on our fancy hardware rating system.

VITAL INFO: A game can't survive without these vitals, so you should probably pay attention to them.

BETTER THAN/WORSE THAN: Everything is relative, right? Because of that, we keep making comparisons between games in this space, and try to be funny about it.

SCORE: You only care about this number, we know that. But try to pretend you read the reviews because they're so insightful and informative. Thank you, we love you.



PLATFORMS: The brightest block is the platform on which the game was reviewed. Dimmer blocks are platforms on which the game also appears. Simple.

GAME NAME: This is the important bit, and you might want to write it down somewhere just in case you need it later.

AWARDS: You won't find these NAG awards, given to games of merit, anywhere but in NAG. Truth.

ICONS: Check the list on the right for our frikkin' sweet icons, distilling the essence of games even further, just for you.

BOTTOM LINE: It all comes down to this, and the words written here will shape the future, moulding it towards gaming excellence.

DISTRIBUTOR LIST

For your convenience, the numbers of the distribution companies

Aleet Distribution	[011] 888-8916	Legend Memory	[011] 314-0817
Apex International	[012] 347-9956	Logitech SA	[011] 656-3375
Asbis	[011] 848 7000	Look & Listen	[011] 467-3717
ASUS SA	[011] 783-5450	Megarom	[011] 234-2680
Axiz	[011] 237-7000	Microsoft	[011] 265-3000
Comstar	[011] 314-5812	MiDigital	[011] 723-1800
Comstek	0860 600-557	MobileG	084 245 5400
Corex	[011] 238-2315	Pinnacle	[011] 265-3000
Creative	[011] 849-2021	Proton Technology	[011] 466-8888
Devon	[041] 365-0258	Rectron	[011] 203-1000
EA South Africa	[011] 516-8300	Sahara	[011] 542-1000
Esquire	0861 70 0000	Ster Kinekor Games	[011] 445-7960
Eurobyte	[011] 234-0142	The Outer Limits	[011] 482-3771
Frontosa	[011] 466-0038	Tuerk Music	[011] 792-8402
Greenstone Interactive	[021] 557-6248	WWE	[011] 462-0150
Headset Solutions	[011] 706-9844		

If your company isn't listed here, phone NAG on [011] 704-2679

THE REVIEW ICONS

The NAG review icons aim to help you get a better idea of what a game is like, while giving us less work to do in the review. Everyone wins, so best memorise this list below and look out for them in the Review score box.

- ACTION:** When you gotta blast, smash, crash and mash your way to victory, it's Action.
- BABYSITTING:** Put the kids to bed, you gotta Babysit this game to make it love you.
- BITCHIN':** When a game just plain rocks despite everything, then it is worthy of the Bitchin'.
- BORING:** Grab your blanket and teddy, we might be in for some Boring to put you to sleep.
- BUGGY:** Truth be told, there is just no excusing a Buggy game because games aren't cheap.
- CASH-IN/LICENSE:** Some companies totally Cash-in on License games, good or bad.
- CINEMATIC:** Sweet-ass cut-scenes, dramatic camerawork and awesome scenes are Cinematic.
- CLONE:** We've seen it before and we'll see it again, because people always Clone good stuff.
- COMPETITIVE:** You don't think Ranked Match is a feature; you think it should be mandatory.
- FOREIGN:** No clue what the game is about or even what is said? Confusing plot? Careful, it might be Foreign!
- ONLINE:** For games that play well with others and generally mean playing with others, Online.
- PARTY:** Get some friends and move the couch, Party games are frikkin' sweet.
- PIECE OF POO:** Sometimes no matter how hard you try, you just can't squeeze a diamond out of a turd.
- STUPID PEOPLE:** Don't worry little buddy, this game holds your hand like a friend.
- ALL AGES:** These games contain no violence, immoral acts or anything that might narrow the demographic, but they may still be difficult.
- KID FRIENDLY:** Kids can play this game without needing an adult every five minutes to explain to them what button to press.
- 16+ RESTRICTION:** If you're 16 or over, you are well within your rights to play this game.
- 18+ RESTRICTION:** If you are not yet 18, please put down this game and back away slowly before the police come and arrest you.
- MULTIPLAYER:** The number on the controller icon indicates the maximum number of people who can play at the same time.

WILL IT RUN? - PC GAME SPECS

PC game specs are a pain for us, because we need to list them for those people who don't consult the box before buying a game. Instead, the reviews will now have a nice number ranking on the side. Higher numbers mean a game is more machine intensive. If a game has all the numbers lit up, it'll run on a 5-year-old piece of junk up to the most bad-ass of machines.

- Your machine has a DirectX 10 graphics card, a dual-core or higher CPU and 2GB or more RAM. You are the centre of gaming-fu. This game will honour your investment. **[DX10 graphics card; dual-core CPU; 2GB+ RAM]**
- Your graphics card has a respectable 256MB of memory and your CPU sits at the higher end of 2GHz, backed by 1-2GB of RAM. A worthy rig for a worthy game. **[256MB graphics card with DX9; 2GHz or more; 1-2GB RAM]**
- Your card sits between 128 and 256MB of RAM with at least DirectX 8 support, while your 2GHz Pentium 4 churns happily with between 512MB and 1GB of RAM. We assume you're slowly saving for an upgrade. **[256MB+ graphics card with DX8; 2GHz Pentium 4; 512MB-1GB RAM]**
- Okay, so you have a graphics card that falls below the 128MB memory point but supports DX8, a chip that you can't call 2GHz even if you wanted and you have 256MB or less RAM. Your PC might be getting more Office action than you'd like to admit. **[128MB or lower graphics card with DX8; Below 2GHz chip; 256MB or lower RAM]**
- You really don't think about your PC specs much. In fact, any hint of upgrade money is spent on something more practical, like a coffee maker with a timer. Fresh coffee first thing in the morning always beats playing games. **[Can run XP, will play game]**

MOBILE MAYHEM

Non Subscription!

To download, sms the
ITEMCODE to 31434
eg. NA57752

Wallpapers - R15

Join Mobile Mayhem
and get all content
below for...
2PRICE (exc. games)
sms **AGED** to **31434**
R15/5 days
see terms at the bottom for more info



Babe Vids - R15

RingTones - R15



Polys	*CoverTones	Artist/Title
NA35565	NA43425	RIHANNA FT JAY-Z - UMBRELLA
NA35645	NA43550	ELEKTRON - DIRTY BASEMENT
NA35649	NA43554	MARY J. BLIGE - WE RIDE
NA35578	NA43345	KSER CHIEFS - EVERYTHING IS AVERAGE NOWADAYS
NA35514	NA43350	LINKIN PARK - WHAT I'VE DONE
NA35577	NA43525	J. TIMBERLAKE - LOVE STONED / I THINK THAT SHE
NA35575	NA43480	FERGIE - BIG GIRLS DON'T CRY
NA35509	NA43349	FALL OUT BOY - THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES
NA35520	NA43333	MIKA - LOVE TODAY
NA35650	NA43555	MODEST MOUSE - DASHBOARD
NA35572	NA43514	THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS - DO IT AGAIN
---	NA43517	LUMIDEE - SHE'S LIKE THE WIND
---	NA43294	CALVIN HARRIS - ACCEPTABLE IN THE 80'S
NA35638	NA43364	GIVEN STEFANI - 4 IN THE MORNING
NA35529	NA43373	GYM CLASS HEROES - CUPID'S CHOKEHOLD
NA35675	NA43596	FRANK TAVAY - ONE LOVE WORLD LOVE
NA35627	NA43539	TIMBALAND FT Keri Hilson - THE WAY I ARE
NA35648	NA43553	MARIO - HOW DO I BREATHE
NA35550	NA43401	FUNERAL FOR A FRIEND - INTO OBLIVION
NA35592	NA43498	BW WOW FT T-PAIN / JOHNTA AUSTIN - OUTTA MY SYS
---	NA43420	ARCTIC MONKEYS - FLUORESCENT ADOLESCENT
NA35539	NA43388	GROOVE ARMADA - GET DOWN
NA35507	NA43342	MARK RONSON - STOP ME
NA35624	NA43530	GREENDAY - WORKING CLASS HERO
NA35562	NA43416	MUTYA BUENA - REAL GIRL

Funny Vids - R15



Hot Celebrities - R15



Games - R30



FREE GAME!



GAMING to 31434

(R30/5Days)
See terms for more info.

* All items on this Mobile Mayhem page are featured as part of the Mobile Mayhem "Pay for what you order" service. Pics, vids, tones and animations cost R15. By sms'ing AGED to 31434 users consent to entering the Mobile Mayhem subscription service, charged at R15 every 5 days. This will entitle users to 2 free credits per 5 days, with additional pics, vids, tones and animations charged at R15 each. Games on this page cost R30. By sms'ing GAMING to 31434 users consent to entering our Gamezone service, charged at R30 every 5 days (subscription). This will entitle users to 1x game per 5 days, in addition to the free game sent to all new Gamezone subscribers (subject to change). Users of any Mobile Mayhem service will receive an updated WAP menu every 5 days including new updated content, from which items can be downloaded. Operator browsing charges apply. Free network minutes/credits do not apply. Errors billed. Sms STOP to 31434 to opt out of Mobile Mayhem marketing or any Mobile Mayhem subscription service. To stop all marketing text STOP ALL to 31434. Network not yet available to cell-c customers. Mobile Mayhem Covertones are not recorded by the original artist and no representation is made to this effect. Customers must be aged 16+ to use this service. Customers must have the permission of the bill payer. By purchasing content from Mobile Mayhem you consent to receiving marketing messages and promotions. For customer support email: help@blingmob.com or Call: 011-461-0317 or post: BLINGMOB! BCM Box London WC1N 3XX



PATCHES AND SUPPORT

Support for this game also looks to make it a winner. As of this writing it has yet to release for the UK, EU, and US markets, but already has 4 major patches totaling about 300MB which are set to be included in those releases. The majority of changes are not actually bug fixes but player-submitted suggestions for improvements and tweaks to things like the horse's controls etc.

Even the demon finds a man who sets himself on fire a bit weird



TWO WORLDS

TWO WORLDS IS QUICKLY being compared to both *Oblivion* and *Gothic 3* by everyone (including its creators), which is in fact a disservice to all three. This game is actually a very different animal, more a member of the Hack 'n Slash family than the Sandbox RPG one. This means it makes a poor substitute for *Oblivion* or *Gothic*, but remains an awesome game if left to stand on its own merits. If you find most scores do not agree with ours on this one, it's because many are evaluating *Two Worlds* for what it's not more than what it is - plain simple whack-the-monsters fun.

The unwitting comparison to *Oblivion* and *Gothic 3* is rather obvious since graphically it looks similar or in some cases even better. It's a 3D third person game where you wander around doing quests and battling monsters. It has a very free-form quest system so you're free to explore, which led everyone to believe this game was a clone. However, it's missing a few key elements of the big "R" in RPG, such as character classes, races, non-combat quests, etc. But as a "small R" RPG (like *Dungeon Siege*, *Sacred*, or even *Diablo*) it shines. The game is addictively fun to play if you're expecting what you get. It's a bit like ice cream. If you're expecting chocolate based on the color, and you get coffee, it's a nasty surprise. But if you knew it was coffee to begin with and

were expecting it, it's quite nice if that's what you're in the mood for. If you go into *Two Worlds* expecting the epic-theme sandbox of *Oblivion* or the complexity of *Gothic 3*, you'll feel let down. If you go in with no expectations and just want to fight bandits, monsters, dwarves, and skeletons, you'll have a blast!

You play a mercenary, and there's no changing that in this game. People ask you to do mercenary-like things as quests, such as find their lost friend or get revenge on someone who owes them money. It's pretty open-ended, despite a large over-arching plot involving your sister being held by mysterious figures who want you to find a lost artifact yadda yadda. Your role is determined by what skills and stats you put points into as you advance, so it's easy to change or mix classes to taste. There's also a great system for dealing with the piles of endless crap items in this kind of game - stacking. The stacking system lets you improve equipment by combining it with another of the same type, making weaker items very useful throughout the game (and reducing trips to town to sell junk). Also the systems for enchanting weapons, customizing spells, and creating items through alchemy are easy, powerful, and fun.

Keep an eye out for this one, it looks to be a winner no matter what anyone else says. **NAG**

Toby Hudson

NAG >>>>
MUST
PLAY ★



Sacred [PC]

KINDA LIKE



Dungeon Siege [PC]

KINDA LIKE



BOTTOM LINE

Don't expect an *Oblivion* or *Gothic 3* clone, and you'll have a great time.

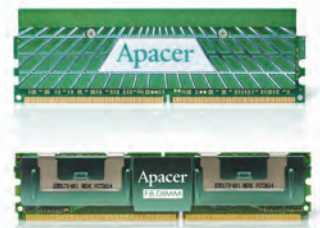
89
OUT OF 100



www.apacer.com



Apacer in your life



Pinnacle

MICRO

www.pinnacle.co.za

Midrand: 011 265 3000 | Cape Town: 021 551 3310 | Durban: 031 263 2090 | East London 043 735 2699
Port Elizabeth: 041 365 1088 | Nelspruit: 013 752 2846 | Bloemfontein: 051 447 1000
Namibia: 00 264 61 249478 | Botswana: 00 267 393 7477 | Zambia 00 260 124 1408

Apacer

Access the best

Upgrade Your Life with Zalman

ULTIMATE PERFORMANCE ULTRA QUIET CPU COOLER **CNPS9700 LED**



The More Powerful CNPS9700 LED with Increased Size and Performance

CNPS9700 LED fully supports the new Intel Core2 Duo and AMD Athlon 64 X2 Dual Core CPUs. It has been upgraded with the best cooling performance acquired with greater dissipation area and Super Thermal Grease ZM-STG1.



Professional Ultra Quiet VGA Cooler VF1000

Maximized surface area applied with Zalman's Patented VFP (Variable Fin Profile) technology brings excellent cooling efficiency and superior performance. This sleek looking VGA Cooler with the use of 4 heatpipes and copper fins is powerful enough to cool down most of the newest and hottest Graphic cards available in the market, even including GeForce 8800 Ultra, GTX and GTS in complement with special RAM heatsink, ZM-RHS88.



Fanless VGA Cooler VNF100

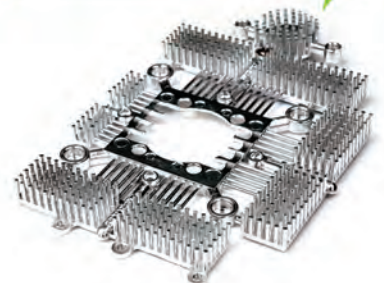
Zalman's patented VFP (Variable Fin Profile) Fin Design maximizes cooling efficiency and dissipation surface area for excellent performance.

VF1000 Optional Package

ZM-RHS88

(for GeForce 8800 Ultra, GTX, and GTS)

This unconventional all-in-one components design allows effective cooling of RAM, FET, I/O Chipset.





TENCHU Z

FOR MANY, MANY YEARS it has been a dream of mine to become a Ninja. I thought it would be cool you know, wearing a mask, wielding a sword, throwing those little stars of death and making an all-round menace of myself. But my dream was spoiled when I got some classified information. Apparently becoming a Ninja takes years of practice and dedication. Now not having the motivation or mental capacity to willingly part with all those years I could be playing games, I needed another outlet for my sneaky ways, and into my lap fell *Tenchu Z*. In all honesty, I never played any of the games in the series, but was told about it over and over, while trying to play this one. *Tenchu Z* is fun, really, it is. You sneak and jump your way around the shadows and roof tops of olden day Japan to take out the enemy, or whoever you got paid to off. All brought to you in the shiny world of the Xbox 360. You start the game by designing your own character. Be it male or female, there are many faces to choose from, and a reasonable wardrobe. Some might say this step is very important to becoming the ultimate Ninja. Soon you'll be designing your side kick. In the first part of the game the side kick is important as he or she features in every single cut scene. Now that you have a Ninja to control, well, go and control him. Take a mission, any mission, almost

all of them involve killing some one. And the killing is good, it builds experience and earns money, all of which you need to buy new moves and objects – objects designed to kill. These range from your standard Ninja issue throwing stars all the way through to exploding darts and sleeping gas. The controls work to your favor, after some getting use to them since not all of it is covered in the tutorial. But don't worry, soon you'll be on your killing way. You see, being *Tenchu* and not *Hitman*, the more you kill, the more you cash in. Take on the enemy face to face and show him some combos, or silently drop in behind him to deal a stealth kill. Just remember to hide the bodies – henchman get very angry if they see their dead friends. The game also features a co-op mode, so get that Live account, and repeat this mantra "Ninja strike force, Assemble!!". That's right, take your friends on any mission and coordinate your efforts. This game might be very easy on easy, but you just try and get a Ninja 5 rating on hard. Someone told me that they wouldn't pay full price for this game, but I think it is worth it, if only to stem your Ninja lust. It's fun, it's slick, and if you were ever a *Hitman* fan, this is the game for you. Oh yes, don't try and ask the Ninja anything, you're supposed to be a silent killer. **NAG**

Eddie Francis

FOR FANS OF

Ninjas

HITMAN

KINDA LIKE

BOTTOM LINE

It still feels and looks like it belongs on the Xbox, not the 360.

7.5

OUT OF 100

MULTIPLAYER
DEMO

NOW AVAILABLE
ON XBOX LIVE®
MARKET PLACE

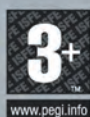


IT'S MORE THAN RACING.

10 SEPTEMBER 2007



Game and Software © 2007 THQ Inc. MotoGP™ '07 and © 2007 Dorna Sports, S.L. MotoGP and related logos, characters, names, and distinctive likenesses thereof are the exclusive property of Dorna Sports, S.L. and/or their respective owners. Used under license. All Rights Reserved. Developed by Climax Racing. Climax Racing and its logo are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Climax Racing Ltd. THQ and the THQ logo are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of THQ Inc. All Rights Reserved. All other trademarks, logos and copyrights are property of their respective owners. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox LIVE, and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies.



CLIMAX

WWW.MOTOGPTHEGAME.COM

MotoGP'07



PROJECT SYLPHEED

THE FREE-RANGE ARCADE SPACE shooter genre has been practically dead for years now, the likes of *Wing Commander* and *Descent: FreeSpace* being nothing more than quaint relics on the shelf of any self-respecting space shooter gamer. *Project Sylpheed* is not *Wing Commander* nor is it *Freespace*, but it's a damn sight closer than anything else and when you look at it that way, *Sylpheed* manages to fill a niche few knew was empty.

Developed by Game Arts (better known for their RPG series *Grandia*) and published by Square Enix, *Sylpheed* is actually the successor to *Slipheed: The Lost Planet* (which unlike *Sylpheed*, was a top-down vertical shooter). The Square Enix touches are apparent and while not entirely capable of smoothing out the rougher edges, they do lend an air of quality to the overall product. It's obvious that Game Arts was slightly overwhelmed by the power of the Xbox 360 and *Sylpheed* suffers slightly from the "small studio on next-gen console" syndrome that plagues titles like *Armoured Core 4* and *Ace Combat 6* - they're trying their best to use all the power available but lack the resources and technical expertise to pull it off flawlessly.

Regardless, the gameplay of *Sylpheed* is a solid experience that combines free range of motion with customisable weapons, massive scope and scale all wrapped up in a whimsical but heartfelt plot that deals with the perils of war and governments that are less than honest about their actions.

The control scheme can be fully

customised with the exception of using the right analogue to try and mimic that of an FPS control scheme, but the Casual and Pro setups should suffice for most players. In the Casual setup the controls are much more arcade-style but do the trick, in Pro setup your rolling is set to the triggers and you can fine-tune your maneuvers in Newtonian space much more easily.

Where *Sylpheed* really comes into its own is in the heat of battle. When two massive forces of capital ships, dreadnoughts and a plethora of light fighters collide, the screen fills with a swirling mass of contrails, tracers and explosions that really manages to excite and thrill. It truly is quite impressive to behold, although the larger missions will occasionally start to frame-drop as things get hairy - a part of the syndrome mentioned earlier. Missions also suffer from slightly unfair time constraints - battles have a time-limit that you'll often find yourself bumping into with no hope of completing the mission before the timer hits zero. It is highly recommended to switch the game to Easy at first until you get comfortable with the controls and mission structure, not to mention the effects of weapons and how best to use them.

Sylpheed has a few interesting quirks, such as a Manoeuvre button that lets you pull off quick inverts and rolls so as to dodge missiles, as well as a set of special abilities, one of which lets you bullet-time to fine-tune shots at a fast-moving target.

It would be easy to overlook *Sylpheed*, but fans of the genre would be missing a fair addition if they did so. **NAG**

Miktar "Do a barrel roll!" Dracon

AS GOOD AS
AS GOOD AS

Wing Commander Prophecy [PC]
Descent: FreeSpace [PC]

BOTTOM LINE
Wing Commander and Descent: FreeSpace fans will feel right at home, but keep longing for greener pastures.

80
OUT OF 100



BELIEVE

26 September 2007

XBOX.COM/HALO3

Pre Order Now

Microsoft
game studios

BUNGIE

Jump in.

 **XBOX 360**



RUGBY 08

IT'S BEEN A BUSY year for sport. Well, busier than most, with the Cricket World Cup, Wimbledon almost raining out, no more Schumacher in F1, doping scandals in the Tour de France and the up coming Pro 20 and Rugby world cups. If only development in Sports gaming were as exciting. The more I play Sports games, the more it feels that sports fans are getting a raw deal. Yes *Rugby 08* is fun, it's damn near the real thing. Yet I still have to blur my vision and use most of my imagination to make the models look anything like their real life versions. But hey, on the other hand, it's still a lot of fun playing like a god on the PS2 rather than staring at the balls in my closet. *Rugby 08* is an EA sports game without any doubt. It plays, looks and feels just like the soccer installments, though I really hope they will adopt the *Rugby 08* control system in the next *FIFA* game. Running, passing, mauls and set pieces are executed with the simple slide of thumb or finger. Slipping the disc into my Playstation, I didn't expect the game to look like much, and truthfully, had it not been for the change in rules, you'd swear this was a *FIFA* game. What I did get though was a game that doesn't load for long and is fun to play. Same as the *FIFA* titles, you choose your team from either the international or domestic leagues. Then you get to play in the Six Nations, Tri

Nations, Super14 or the world cup, or just build a custom match between, lets say, the All Blacks and some puny little nation not worthy of the Webb Ellis cup. You can manage your own team, transfer players and design your own set pieces. But remember, you can unsettle your team balance, thus bringing team morale to a sudden crash. In the challenge mode you can throw yourself into famous and historic rugby matches, just to see if you can change the outcome and unlock more legendary teams and kits. All your favorite stadiums are there, filled to the brim with cheering crowds and the soothing voice of the commentator to congratulate and mock you throughout your match. A fun, but dangerous past time is tapping the R3 button during rucks and mauls. This instructs your players to use their hands, highly illegal in the game of rugby. Funny how it has a built-in cheat button. But tempted has you are, don't do it. Nothing is worse than losing an easy match just because half your team are in the sin bin. At the end of it all, it was fun revisiting my primary school days. Back then I might have sucked at rugby, but now I've won the world cup, baby. And for those real fans, it seems the Springboks can reach the final without being human controlled. Good luck to the Boks come France. **NAG**

Eddie Francis

Really getting tackled



Playing a soccer game



BOTTOM LINE

It's an EA sports game through and through

80
OUT OF 100



gaming



gaming



Do gaming like never before. If you're going to do gaming, Do Broadband. An all-in-one offering that gives you high speed broadband access and your internet account at a single discounted price. Now you can Do the connection starting at just **R199 pm that includes DSL access and 1GB internet usage.** Which allows you to play whoever, whatever, whenever.

To get in on the game, call 10219 now or visit your nearest Telkom *direct* shop.

WIN loads of prizes! Visit the **Do Broadband** stand at the **rAge** Expo, happening from 28 - 30 September, at the Dome in Northgate, Johannesburg.

Terms and conditions apply. E & OE.



Broadband
Powered by Telkom

www.dobroadband.co.za



Touch tomorrow



RAINBOW SIX VEGAS [PSP]

RRP→ R265 | Publisher→ UbiSoft
Distributor→ Megarom
Genre→ Third-person shooter

THE OPENING CINEMATIC SWEEPS grandly over the perennially blazing billboards and skyscrapers of *Sin City*, interspersed with super-slo-mo footage of a spinning roulette wheel and squads of villains damaging the carpets of a glitzy casino. Most of the game, however, takes place in caves, bland Spanish haciendas, and water filtration facilities. There's not a desperate 50-something starlet draped over a leopard in sight.

The trickiest thing to nail when porting FPS titles to PSP is the control system. Given the portable's single analogue stick setup, some marvellous jiggery-pokery needs to be in place to adequately compensate for this. Zipper Interactive's recent *Socom: Fireteam Bravo 2* did a cracking job with it, but *Vegas* has trotted out a nightmare of Lovecraftian proportions. Movement is mapped to the stick, and camera controls to the face buttons. It's like wading through pea soup. While the inevitable precision targeting issues are avoided with a lock-on function, this sluggishness really detracts from what should be high intensity experience.

The *Rainbow Six* franchise has always been squad-centric, but *Vegas* gives you only two operatives to play with. And you can't boss each other around or swap between them whenever the fancy takes you, either – or fiddle with their gear very much, for that matter. This insidious shortcoming becomes suddenly and abundantly apparent when Shawn, the sniper guy, charges into a room full of terrorists armed only with a bulky, slow, and really rather impractical PSG-1. **NAG**

Tarryn "Locked and Loaded" van der Byl

RAINBOW SIX VEGAS [PS3]

RRP→ R599 | Publisher→ UbiSoft | Distributor→ Megarom | Genre→ FPS

RAINBOW SIX VEGAS, the latest instalment in the renowned series, makes its long-awaited appearance on the PlayStation 3, and the result is not disappointing. Already released for the PC and Xbox 360, *Rainbow Six Vegas* places you in control of the leader of an elite counter-terrorist outfit, charged with the task of putting a stop to terrorist strikes on Las Vegas. The storyline is quite cohesive and intriguing, if somewhat contrived, but it does well enough to hold all the action together.

The game's controls have been translated quite superbly to the PS3 SIXAXIS controller, with the setup being very intuitive, with the exception of the sometimes awkward implementation of motion-sensing (as seems to be a pattern with ported PS3 titles). The artificial intelligence is also impressive, with your computer-controlled team-mates actually being helpful rather than hindering you. The enemies too are quite smart, and utilise cover quite effectively, forcing you to do the same; run-and-gun tactics won't get you very far, but methodical and well thought out strategies will.

Online play is provided through the

PlayStation Network, with abundant game modes and maps available, as well as customisable characters (though the Xbox's face-mapping technology is absent). The visuals too are generally impressive, though the PlayStation 3 version's graphics do tend to be a little less clear and vivid than those of the Xbox 360 incarnation.

Rainbow Six Vegas is a successful and well put together first outing for the Rainbow team on the PlayStation 3 – it's an enjoyable strategic team shooter that won't disappoint. **NAG**

Adam Liebman

BOTTOM LINE

Fantastic team-based strategic shooter that's not to be missed



BOTTOM LINE

Roughly comparable to, say, two right numbers and the bonus ball.



PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

360

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB

BLAZING ANGELS 2

SECRET MISSIONS OF WWII



ALL NEW
CO-OP AND
MULTIPLAYER
MODES

**FEW AIRCRAFT REMAIN SECRET
MOST HEROES ARE FORGOTTEN**



www.blazingangels2.com



megarom
www.megarom.co.za
Tel: +27 11 361 4800
sales@megarom.co.za



XBOX 360 LIVE



PLAYSTATION 3

UBISOFT

Blazing Angels® 2: Secret Missions of WWII © 2007 Ubisoft Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. Blazing Angels, Ubisoft and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the US and/or other countries. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox Live, and the Xbox, Xbox 360, and Xbox Live logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries. "B" and "PLAYSTATION" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

360

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB

PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

360

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB



The railing was too slow on the draw

CALL OF JUAREZ

RRP→ R439 | Publisher→ Ubisoft | Distributor→ Megarom | Genre→ Action

A PART FROM RIDING DINOSAURS, being a super ninja or commandeering your own ship terrorizing the seas with romantic piracy, there's always the option of being a cowboy. Wearing a ten gallon hat and six-chamber gun, not to mention rope, horse blanket, a great horse and an Indian sidekick. You could indulge in the fantastic vigilante style of the *Lone Ranger*, the gritty vigilante style of the *Magnificent Seven* or the "you hurt my horse's feelings" vigilante style of Clint Eastwood. Whatever you want, cowboy lore can deliver it- even giant robots (*Wild Wild West*), magical orbs (*Brisco County Jr.*) or just plain badass (*Deadwood*). Cowboys are everywhere, even in games.

There are actually quite a few good cowboy-themed games, but *Call of Juarez*

hoped to trump them all with its edgy movie-style presentation of Billy the half-Indian who has to avenge his mom's death. Problem is that the brother of his stepfather is convinced he did the killing and wants revenge as well. In a nice twist, you play both characters and the game does a great job getting you to see things from both their perspectives. It's also a chance to give two types of gameplay – Billy's whip-and-jump antics versus the Reverend's relentless gun play. Unfortunately it doesn't hold together all that well. Billy's movement can be finicky just when you don't need it to be, while the reverend's shooting is usually dull and uninspiring. But the game's presentation and story-telling is nice, plus visually it has some truly stunning moments.

Call of Juarez lacks something that keeps

it from being outstanding, but at least it's not simply passable or mediocre. It languishes somewhere in-between, so if you can get past its shortcomings, and you dig your cowboy lore, you'll have fun. **NAG**

James Francis

18+

BOTTOM LINE
Looks good and plays well, but lacks real mood and atmosphere.

68
OUT OF 100



WARTECH: SENKO NO RONDE

RRP→ R555 | Publisher→ Ubisoft | Distributor→ Megarom | Genre→ Action

OKAY, YOU'RE GOING TO have to use some imagination here because *WarTech* is a bit confusing to explain. Imagine a fighting game like *Soul Calibur* or *Tekken*, but instead of martial arts moves you have a variety of bullet barrage patterns such as the ones usually found in top-down arcade shooters like *Raptor: Call of the Shadows*, *Tyrian* or *Ikaruga*. To make it even more convoluted, at any time a player can use their B.O.S.S. "bomb" to turn into a giant spaceship that spews out obscene amounts of bullets that the other player has to dodge for a while.

So basically, it's a fighting game where you duel using bullet patterns and super

attacks. By now you may be thinking it sounds suspiciously Japanese and you're right – it's a new take on the famous Japanese arcade game from 2004 that managed to gather cult status from all those who like that type of thing. There are eight characters each with two variations, each character is uniquely different in terms of how they play, move and shoot. The story mode is your standard fighting-game fare, you fight your way up the ladder until you reach the end.

This is an extremely niche title and most people are going to wonder who could even enjoy something like this, but suffice to say those that do enjoy this kind of thing will zen

right out in the midst of the swirling patterns of light and colour that represent life and death on a cosmic scale. [Deep, Ed] **NAG**

Miktar "rRootage" Dracon

BOTTOM LINE
There are perhaps a few thousand people on the planet who would love this game - but they will.

75
OUT OF 100

MAGIC

The Gathering[®]

TRADING CARD GAME



Worldwide Pre-release Tournaments
(September 28, 2007)

Worldwide Release (October 12, 2007)

Lorwyn cards are legal in Constructed **OP**
events on October 20, 2007.
This also marks the rotation of Ravnica™
block cards out of Standard.

JHB  **Pre-release
Tournaments will be held at**

Age
EXPO

(September 28-30, 2007)

OFFICIAL DISTRIBUTORS IN
SOUTH AFRICA



magic@icon.co.za

www.geon.co.za



PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

360

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB



Make sure your insurance covers
Giant Alien Robot damage

TRANSFORMERS: THE GAME

RRP→ R499 | Publisher→ Activision | Distributor→ Megarom | Genre→ Action

FOR A WHILE NOW, games based on movies have been improving dramatically. Recent offerings, even those that are just a literal cash-in on the movie popularity haven't been bad at all, with perhaps only the odd exception here and there. *Transformers: The Game* however, is just plain horrible.

It starts off good and initially you may be fooled into thinking that, hey, this game might just rock! The opening scenes and missions (if you pick Autobots) with Bumblebee sets a good precedent both visually and in terms of controls. The transformation sequence from bot to car looks every bit as cool as in the movie but after you complete a few objectives and missions things start to go downhill.

It's as if the game was completed before the movie was even done filming and Travellers Tales scrambled to fill in the gaps with whatever they could think up. The missions become nonsensical, the plot goes all over the place while the constant recycling of enemies and ideas quickly starts to sour the more solid sides of the game. The destructible element of the environment, while impressive, rarely gets utilized for proper effect. The Transformers themselves are portrayed strangely, as if the game was made for kids too young to even see the movie (which is very plausible).

No doubt it will sell, no doubt it will be at the top of the charts while the movie retains its (deserved) popularity – but anyone

expecting an actual game in the box might be disappointed to find only a hole that says "Insert Money Here". **NAG**

Miktar "No Dinobots ;,;" Dracon

Icons: Game controller, Pool, Dollar sign, Sad face, Lightning bolt, Plane.

BOTTOM LINE

It sounds odd to say, but we've really come to expect better from movie-license games.

49
OUT OF 100

Progress bar: 4 yellow, 1 orange, 5 white.



VAMPIRE RAIN

RRP→ R445 | Publisher→ Microsoft | Distributor→ MiDigital | Genre→ Stealth

NAG'S REVIEW OF BULLET *Witch* was quite defensive – and rightly so. Despite its many, many flaws there was something about the game that demanded your attention. Once you got to grips with the pedantic control system and fiddly spell casting, there was a certain awesome quality to the game. Perhaps we just loved giant monsters with blood gushing from their exposed hearts. But this game, which judging by the engine and AQ's involvement comes from the same stock, should be avoided at all costs.

Essentially vampires are everywhere, so you are the new rookie in an elite vampire-hunting squad. No problems there. You will kill said vampires through stealth and precision, ala *Splinter Cell*, though with

an easier control scheme. No problem there either. Finally, you will sneak around vampires that can kill you in a heartbeat, creating some incredible game tension. Terrific. But it all falls apart completely and utterly pretty much from the start.

The control system works, but everything else is really, really bland. Visually the game is lackluster, while the character dialog becomes torturous after a while. Sneaking past vampires is a mixture of stupid AI and dumb luck, because you're never sure when one of the bloodsuckers might be able to see you. If they do, you will die and you will have to restart the mission.

There's nothing cool or fulfilling about playing *Vampire Rain*. The controls are simple, yet the game is inexplicably hard,

while the graphics are bland and the entire package largely nonsensical.

Splinter Cell meets vampires is a great hot-blooded idea. This game, though, just plain sucks. **NAG**

James Francis

Icons: 18+, Game controller, Purple star, Zzz.

BOTTOM LINE

Bland and poor gameplay and graphics combine with frustrating difficulty.

40
OUT OF 100

Progress bar: 4 yellow, 1 orange, 5 white.

PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

360

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB

Go To War.....



Get The Following:

- Console
- Internal 20GB Hard Drive
- 2 x Wireless Controllers
- Halo 3 Standard Edition

only
R3999⁰⁰

only
available
on XBox 360

save
R700⁰⁰

Look & Listen - NAG's preferred gaming retailer.

DVD • CD • GAMES • MP3 • ACCESSORIES

GAUTENG - Fourways: 011 467 1115 • Cresta: 011 476 4142 • Hyde Park: 011 325 4237 • East Rand: 011 823 3642
Clearwater: 011 675 3648 • **Lenasia:** 011 852 3231 • **Atterbury:** 012 991 6626 • **Menlyn:** 012 368 1080 • **Greenstone:** 011 524 0049 **Now Open**
DURBAN - Pavilion: 031 265 1600 • **FREE STATE** - Bloemfontein: **Opening Aug 07** • **WESTERN CAPE** - Cavendish: 021 683 1810
Century City: 021 551 4647 • **Willowbridge:** 021 914 0760 • **Worcester:** 023 342 1502 • **NORTH WEST** - Rustenburg: 014 537 3466
MPUMALANGA - Nelspruit: 013 752 4524 • Witbank: 013 692 4530 **Now Open**
Shop online at www.lookandlisten.co.za. Open 'til 10.30pm, 7 days a week.

While stocks last. E&OE. Prices and availability subject to change at the discretion of the supplier.

eB eBucks
The Reward of Choice

RCS credit

Discovery
Reward + Save + Spend



Look & Listen
For the Fans

118db SNR !

Crystal Clear Audio with ASUS Xonar D2

A recent entrant into the audio card scene, the ASUS Xonar D2 is a breakthrough audio card that is based on the advanced AV200 audio chip. It not only provides unprecedented sound quality on the PC platform, but also integrates multiple sound-enhancing technologies from Dolby® and DTS to transform your PC into a high-quality digital home media center.

Unparalleled Sound Clarity and 3D Sound Positioning

The ASUS Xonar D2 provides astounding audio quality that features a signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) of 118 db for both audio in and out - reaching the limit of audio quality on most PC platforms. Unlike generic sound cards in the market that provide the highest SNR to only the front stereo outputs, the Xonar D2 is able to deliver 118 db quality audio for all 7.1 channels. Additionally, the Xonar D2 delivers outstanding game audio quality and 3D positioning in PC 3D games with full support for DirectX technology that specifies and creates 3D positions of sounds around the player for 4, 5.1, or 7.1 speaker configurations.

Backup Music Files for Portable Entertainment

The Xonar D2 also comes with a special application called "Portable Media Processor". This application works with the onboard ALT (Analog Loopback Transformation) circuit to provide almost lossless analog recording audio quality from your digital music files purchased from online stores. What's even better is that you can even add Dolby Headphone or Dolby Virtual Speaker effects to the converted music files - allowing you to freely enjoy high quality audio tracks enhanced by worldly recognized audio technology on-the-go.

" The ASUS Xonar D2 provides astounding audio quality that features a signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) of 118 db - reaching the limit of audio quality on most PC platforms"



PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

360

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB

PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

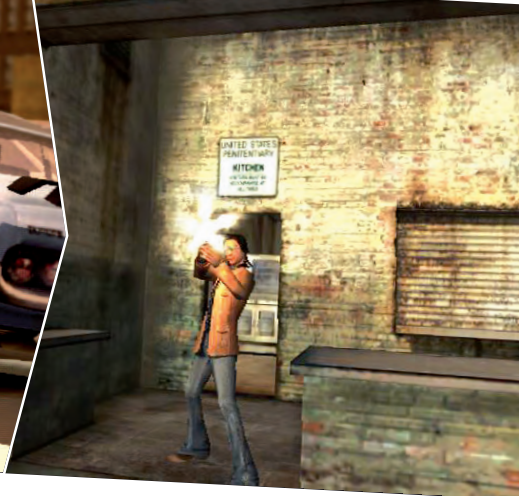
360

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB



DRIVER: PARALLEL LINES

RRP→ R199 | Publisher→ Ubisoft | Distributor→ Megarom | Genre→ Driving | PC Spec→ 1 2 3 4 5

HERE'S A FIRST. AS a reviewer I will readily admit that I didn't even play more than 20 minutes of this game before hammering out this review. In all fairness, I should take the game at face value, but there is a single big problem here: this is not *Driver*. *Driver*, the first game at least, was about driving cars in intense situations, such as getting away from cops after a robbery. It was about being able to control your vehicle and get the most out of the car while also dodging road blocks and aggressive adversaries shooting at you. But the series has lost its way completely, culminating in this – a low-rent knock-off of *GTA*.

A *GTA*-style game isn't a bad thing, but

how do you call a game *Driver* and then give players arcade car physics and control that works best when you simply run from flaming wreck to new car on the curb? There is no challenge here for anyone actually interested in a good driving game. In fact, it will just be an exercise of frustration.

A completely spoiled chance, yet again, and we might as well start to mourn *Driver's* death. If the developer ever reads this, *Driver* should control something like *Test Drive Unlimited* or at the very least *Need for Speed*. Get your heads out of your collective asses and stop copying genres that don't fit. **NAG**

James Francis

18+ 100% 100%

BOTTOM LINE

A low-rent *GTA* clone and not remotely what *Driver* used to be.

45
OUT OF 100

100% 100% 100% 100% 100%



32ND AMERICA'S CUP

RRP→ R299 | Publisher→ Focus Home Entertainment | Distributor→ Apex Interactive | Genre→ Virtual Sailing Simulation | PC Spec→ 1 2 3 4 5

SIMULATION IS MY THING; preferably involving aircraft in one form or another. So why am I reviewing a sailing game? Ask the NAG Editor. Why am I waffling on about stuff nothing to do with the game? Why am I asking irrelevant questions? I'm taking up space because this game doesn't offer much to write about. But it is well made...

The concept is solid, players participate in one of the sailing worlds most famous races. The game play is very competitive all be it slow. A good understanding of sailing is needed. The tutorials are helpful but the manual included with the installation disk offers little more than the keyboard shortcuts. A brief overview of the principals of sailing and sail rigging is offered but this is hopelessly inadequate for the novice. The simulation does not hold your hand.

As with any modern simulation, realism is

as important as the graphics. *32nd Americas Cup* does not disappoint in either department. The graphics are splendid (I'm trying to sound posh and nautical here) with great attention to detail. The simulation takes full advantage of DirectX 10 technology. Water effects, dynamic shine and special effects add to the level of emersion. From the way the wind fills the sails to the wake left by the boats hull as it slices through the water, it's all very good.

The sound set is not half bad although there is not much to be heard other than the wind and the sea. There are some nice touches like the snap of the sail as the wind fills it and the metallic sound of the cables running through the channels as the sales are hoisted. The game play is challenging but slow. With just the wind to rely on, a high level of skill is needed for the slightest chance of

success. Several forms of racing are offered including an arcade mode, online racing and the simulated America's Cup. Various boats are also on offer for added variety including Team Shoshalusa. **NAG**

Sean James

100% 100% 100% 100% 100%

BOTTOM LINE

Great detail, great graphics and stunning realism but slow and boring. Not your typical NAG reader's thing.

55
OUT OF 100

100% 100% 100% 100% 100%

There can be only one Powerful and Silent

HYBRID LIQUID COOLING SYSTEM RESERATOR XT

Active/Passive Hybrid Cooling Design
Automatic/Manual Control Modes
Warning & Alarm System
Comprehensive Visual Monitoring Display
Automatic Power ON/OFF
Quick Couplings for Fast, Convenient and
leak free installation & maintenance



High Performance CPU WATER BLOCK

Improved flow circulation by cylindrical fins
Dimple type processing for optimized weight and cooling performance.
Pure copper-base for excellent heat transfer
Broad compatibility with tubes of various sizes



Striking Performance VGA WATER BLOCK

For GeForce 8800 Ultra/GTX and GeForce 8800 GTS

Innovative Dimple-type processing technology for light weight
Pure anodized aluminum base for excellent heat transfer and anti-corrosion
Optimized design for direct cooling of RAM, FET, and I/O chipset
High performance thermal pads



PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

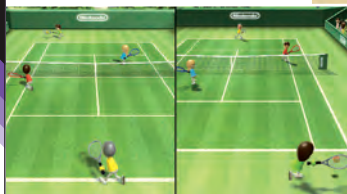
360

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB



WII SPORTS

RRP→ Bundled | Publisher→ Nintendo | Distributor→ Nintendo | Genre→ Sport

WHEN YOU BUY A Nintendo Wii, you get *Wii Sports* with it for free. In my opinion that means *Wii Sports* should technically be exempt from having a silly out-of-a-hundred score slapped on at the end of this review since free equals awesome even if the game ends up being crap. Thankfully, *Wii Sports* is anything but crap and probably best represents what the Wii is going for – fun, quirky, physical interactions that bring the game that little bit more to life.

Wii Sports is a collection of five sports games, each using the Wii Remote (Wiimote) and its motion-sensing technology. Tennis, Golf and Bowling support up to four players while Baseball and Boxing support up to two.

The games all use the Wiimote as if you're doing the real thing and you swing, bowl, tee, putt and box with fun amicable mimicry of the actual thing. It's not 100% like the real thing except perhaps for Baseball which does a remarkable job of moving your virtual bat exactly how you swing your Wiimote, but that's a good thing for accessibility.

There are a variety of training modes to help you get into the games or fine-tune your skills and stat-tracking shows you a nice graph of how much better (or worse) you're doing. The best way to consume *Wii Sports* is with some friends, especially Tennis, which really brings out the social aspect and gives you someone to gloat

over when you win. It's a shame *Wii Sports* does not have online play as it would have benefited greatly from it. **NAG**

Miktar "Sports Age" Dracon



BOTTOM LINE

It's free, it's fun and it tries something new but familiar. Can't go wrong with that.



FLYBOYS

RRP→ R299 | Publisher→ Electric Distribution | Distributor→ Interactive Magic | Genre→ Flight Combat Simulation | PC Spec→ 1 2 3 4 5

THERE ARE SPANS OF Flight Combat Simulations on the market. The genre has been around for more than twenty years. Most of the good ones require that you read through some thick operator's manual and have an extensive knowledge of the aircraft you take into battle. The developers of *Flyboys* have taken a different approach. They set out to combine arcade style simplicity with great graphics and super realism and intense aerial combat.

This simulation is based on the movie, *Flyboys*, and set during the First World War. If you have not seen the movie it won't set you at a disadvantage.

This was a time when Britain, France and Italy faced defeat at the hands of the mighty German army. America was not interested in getting involved but by 1917 the mood had

changed among citizens and some selfless young men joined the fray. A small group of airman took the fight to the Germans over France and the simulation brings this to life.

The simulation is easy to get up and running. A few tutorial flights will give you enough to get airborne and killing the enemy within 15 minutes. Although the learning curve is a steep one, the game is forgiving. Regular combat simmers will not have trouble getting to grips with it. The novice will find the game does hold your hand to some degree but getting your first kill is quite another thing.

The action is intense. Fighting off wave after wave of German fighters. As one progresses through the campaigns the intensity increase with your proficiency. At times the intensity is all a bit much. The simulation has no setting to decrease skill levels or difficulty levels. This

is a massive shortcoming. Not everyone has a gift at computer games but most enjoy playing them and should be allowed to at whatever difficulty levels. As one progresses thought the game you are awarded rewards. The rewards unlock World War II action. **NAG**

Sean James



BOTTOM LINE

A good mid-range combat simulation but like most combat sims suffers from a lack of longevity.



PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

360

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB

NAG

GET THE LATEST GAMING NEWS ON YOUR MOBILE.

HOW DO I GET IT?

SMS "MOBI NAG" to 36978 for a once-off fee of R5. No subscription charges for weekly updates, just minimal network data charges.

WILL MY PHONE WORK?

Your phone must have java and be GPRS enabled with a full color screen. Go to www.mobizines.co.za for more information and a list of compatible cell phones. See the list below.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

A once off cost of R5 to send the sms and get the application.

GET IT NOW.

SMS "MOBI NAG" to 36978



THIS IS NOT A SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE!

NOKIA 3155i 3220 3230 3250 5300 5500 6020 6030 6061 6111 6126 6131 6170 6230 6230i 6233 6234 6235 6255 6260 6265 6267 6270 6280 6288 6300 6600 6620 6630 6670 6680 6681 7370 7390 7610 8800 E50 E60 E61 E61i E65 E70 N70 N71 N72 N73 N75 N76 N80 N90 N91N92 N93 N93i N95 N95i
For a full list of compatible phones and other information go to www.mobizines.co.za

Get regular updates from South Africa's leading games magazine.

NOKIA

 **MOBIZINES**

 **MOBIZINES**

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

YOU WAKE UP IN a mortuary, your body grotesquely scarred and laid out upon a funereal bier, surrounded by the grim trappings of death. Shrugging off the lingering vestiges of some distant and inscrutable nightmare, you sit yourself up. There's this really chatty disembodied skull banging around in the space just next to you. Introducing himself as Morte, this indefatigable floater swiftly designates you his 'Chief', and asks about the tattoo on your back. Tattoo? Yes, there's this rather remarkable tattoo on your back – it's a message about a journal, and some cutter named Pharod. Only, you don't have the book, and you've no idea who this Pharod cove is. Come to think of it, you've no idea who you are. You'd better find a way to give these lurking Dustman leatherheads the laugh, get yourself out into the Cage, and tumble to the dark of it all. 'Midst the noisome stench of rotting corpses, stale intestinal emissions and formaldehyde, you smell adventure.

Released in 1999, *Planescape: Torment* was somehow – scandalously – eclipsed by its then recent predecessor, *Fallout 2*, and quick successor, *Icwind Dale*. Thus, despite overwhelming critical acclaim and subsequent inclusion in several prestigious "Best Games Ever" lists, the game sold only a wretched 400 000 or so copies. With only a single short-run reissue in 2001, it has since become a much sought-after cult classic, and we've only

managed to get our claws on it through larceny, extortion, and murder most foul.

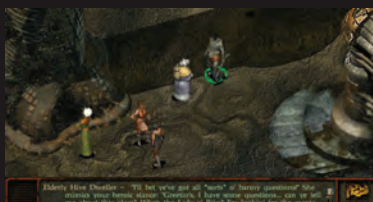
While *Torment* uses an *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* ruleset, the player-side character development system is not nearly as expansive as one might reasonably expect. You can't even give yourself a name cribbed from *Lord of the Rings* or some horrible pulp fantasy novel, and instead remain The Nameless One throughout the game. You'll start off as a fighter, and be given opportunities during the course of the game to change your class to a thief or wizard, but feats, skills, and all that other tommyrot are decided automatically by the game whenever you gain a level. Your alignment is determined by your actions, so telling fibs is better avoided if you fancy being the saintly sort. And instead of the, "Stand aside and unhand thy baubles, vile kobold, afore I cleave thee verily in twain with mine sharp sword. Oh, there I've gone and done it," stuff, there's a marked emphasis on dialogue, negotiation, and a grand tale that unfolds itself through some 800 000 words of script. In fact, it is claimed that there are only four unavoidable combat encounters in the game – all others may be tiptoed around, or talked out of. Lead designer and writer Chris Avellone explained that this heretically unorthodox approach stemmed from his own experience with RPGs, and "some conventions that I wanted to break. I also didn't want to see any dwarves, elves, or

halflings in the world, or magic swords, and I especially didn't want the main character to save the world because I was sick to death of that crap."

Instead, the game's focus is simply on unravelling the mysterious mystery of The Nameless One's past. As it turns out, his amnesia isn't some sort of temporary and easily-remedied forgetfulness. He's an immortal, countless centuries (perhaps millennia) old already, and for some occult reason doomed to keep returning from death, with no memory of his identity or life before. Unlike just about every other fantasy game out there, The Nameless One is no selfless hero with boyish good looks and roguish charm – on the contrary, he's a grotesquely twisted creature with what increasingly appears to have been an extraordinarily eventful, and frequently wicked, past. **NAG**

BOGGLE YOUR BRAIN-BOX, CUTTER

- The rather peculiar slang used in the game, referred to therein as 'The Cant', is in fact an authentic 17th century London working-class dialect. And by the time you finish the game, you'll be telling your annoying younger sibling to, "Stop rattling yer bone-box and pike it, you sodding berk" without a moment's hesitation.
- Ghoulish industrial / dark ambient musician Lustmord was conscripted to produce an original soundtrack for the game, but at some point the project changed hands between producers, and an entirely new musical direction was decided upon. Lustmord later described it all as a "terrible experience".
- A book-of-the-game, imaginatively entitled *Torment: A Novelization*, was released around the same time as the game itself. It's reputedly rubbish.
- Contrary to the beliefs of many conspiracy theorists, The Nameless One does not, in fact, have a true name. Possibilities bandied about during the course of the game, including Adahn and Yemeth, are simply ad hoc conveniences.
- Despite an uncanny resemblance, that weird looking dude on the box isn't Norwegian troll rocker, Mortii. It's game director Guido Henkel himself, sporting some heavy-duty prosthetics and a digital makeover.
- In (yet another) significant departure from standard D&D fare, only three swords appear in the game. These are Trias's Celestial Fire (only useable by Lawful Good characters), Coaxmetal's Entropic Blade (only useable by fighters and thieves), and Dak'kon's Zerth Blade (he totally won't share it with anyone). *Torment* is also the only computer adaptation of D&D to feature an overwhelmingly steampunk aesthetic.
- The tiefling, Annah, and tanar'ri, Fall-From-Grace, were inspired by Betty and Veronica from the Archie comics. Omg.
- 'Funereal' is not incorrectly spelled. 'Cove' is a word meaning roughly 'guy', and is used in the game. The sentence in blue following this is written in "the Cant". It'll make sense to anyone who's played the game. :)

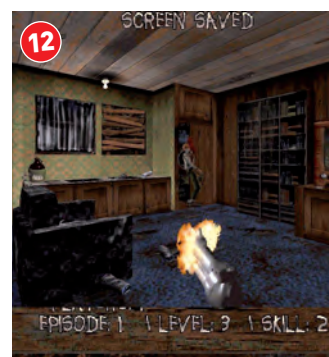
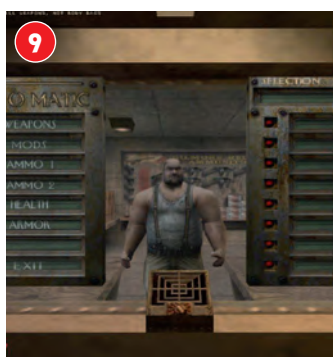
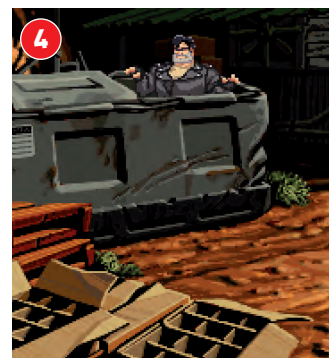
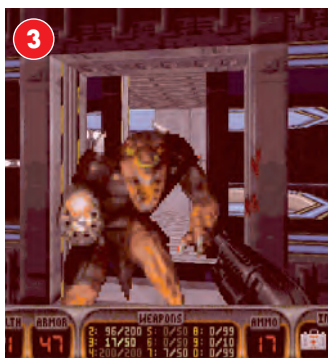
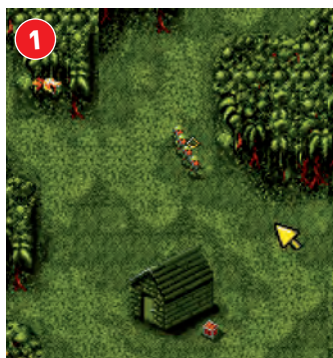


NAME THE GAMES AND WIN A PRIZE FROM MEGAROM!

megarom
interactive

WIN! WIN! WIN!

DO ANY OF THE game screenshots on this page look familiar to you? If you recognise them, write down the names of the games they're from, e-mail your answers to nagcomps@tidemedia.co.za with the subject line 'Name That Game September' and you stand a chance of winning an awesome copy of *The Witcher* for PC, courtesy of Megarom Interactive! The competition closes when the October issue of NAG hits shelves (the last Thursday of September). Congratulations to **Martin Grondein**, our August winner and extreme gaming gamer! He won himself a copy of *Transformers: The Game* for Xbox 360, and his prize is on its way!



LAST MONTH'S GAMES: 1. Beyond Good & Evil; 2. Bloodrayne; 3. Bookworm; 4. Chip's Challenge; 5. Commander Keen; 6. Doom; 7. Double Dragon; 8. Dragon's Lair; 9. Duke Nukem 3D; 10. Dungeon Keeper; 11. Half-Life 2; 12. Heart of Darkness; 13. Hitman; 14. Karateka; 15. Max Payne; 16. Mortal Kombat; 17. No One Lives Forever; 18. Overlord; 19. Space Quest; 20. Thief

Q & A: AQUARIA

5 hour lunches? Getting up at the crack of noon? Pouring a new game into an old mold? There might be a few luxuries to being an indie developer, but those are not any of them. Instead it's renting a tuxedo and being awarded the top prize in indie gaming today, with lots of hard work before and after. That's the Bit Blot story, which won the IGF grand prize for its upcoming title *Aquaria*. Alec Holowka, who joins Derek Hu as the dynamic duo behind indie developer, chatted with NAG about their upcoming game.



Story is a big focus for *Aquaria*, how do you view the importance of stories in games? Do you feel being indie or not affects a game's approach to story?

I feel that stories and game play go hand-in-hand, and having a good balance of both is key to creating an immersing experience. In *Aquaria*, we worked hard to make sure all the elements of the game are thematically linked. The music, the voice overs, the game play and the visuals all have strong connections to each other and the story.

Since we're indies, we don't have the resources to create hundreds of pages of dialog or have a cast of hundreds. Thinking of what was feasible for us was one of the inspirations for basing the game mainly around one character, and her experiences in the world of *Aquaria*.

How did it feel to win the grand prize at the Independent Games Festival, back in March 2007?

It felt great! I was really surprised and thrilled. When we first talked of entering the IGF, we thought "we just have to get nominated for something." Once we were nominated for four awards, we thought "well now we just have to win something!" I never really imagined that we'd win the top prize. It still hasn't completely sunk in yet.

Everyone's interested in the magic and song singing in *Aquaria*. Can you tell us a little more about how it works and what you'll be able to achieve using them?

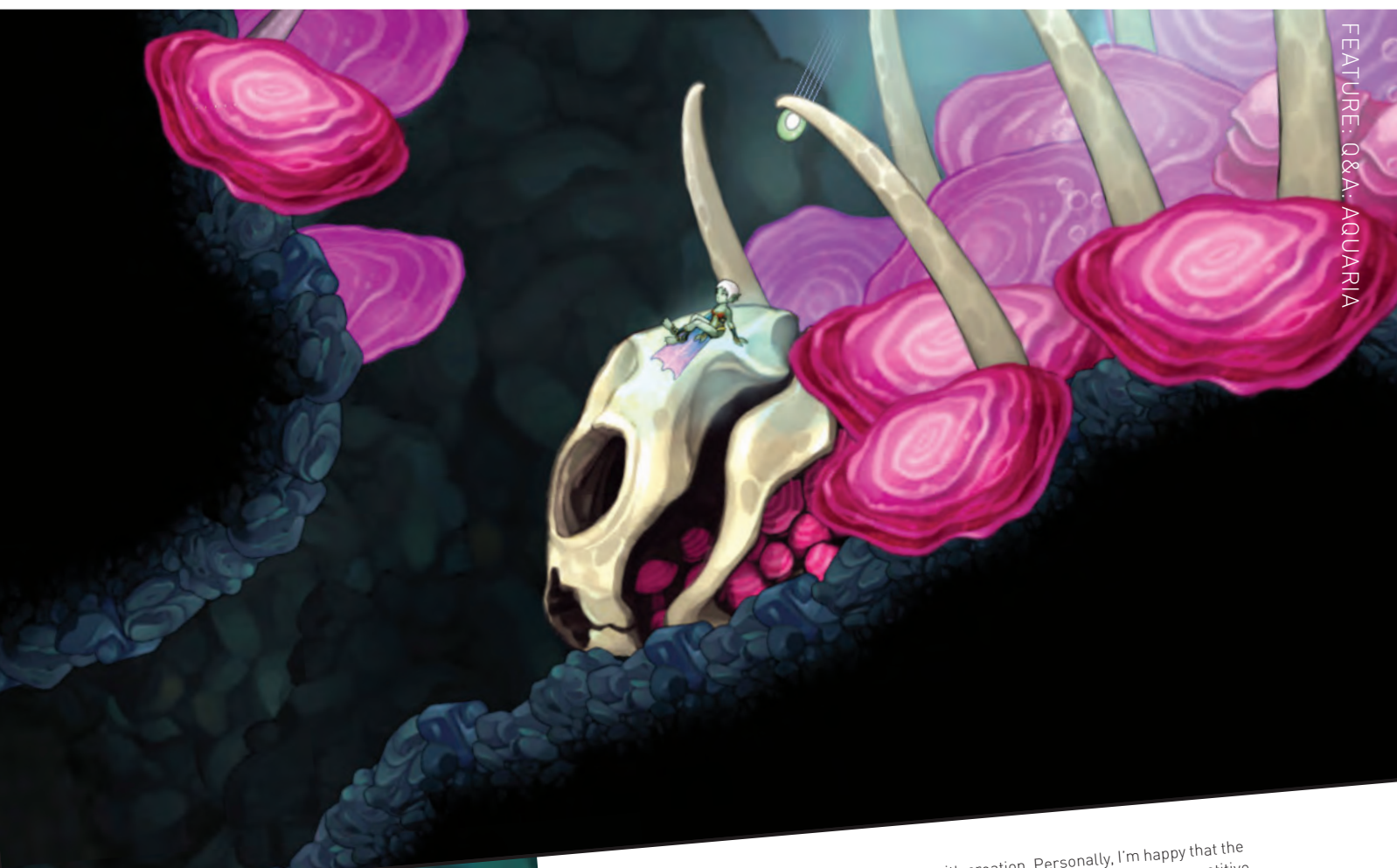
Essentially... when you hold down the right mouse button over Naija (the main character), you get a circle of eight notes around her. These notes are different pitches and have different a symbol and color associated to them. When you move the cursor over one of them, Naija sings that note.

With just that there's a lot of little neat things you can do, like get creatures to follow you and affect things in the environment. Eventually, you learn songs, which are combinations of notes. Some of those combinations transform Naija into different forms, giving her access to other abilities.

What were your major inspirations for *Aquaria* and how long as this game been stewing before development started?

The game started before I met up with Derek Yu - a little over two years ago. The main inspiration came from thinking about what an underwater fantasy game would be like, and what would happen if you took epic action adventure fantasy story and game play and placed it in this underwater environment. There's something very thematically interesting about a world that is contained,





and a character who is trapped in it.

I ended up making a prototype of the mouse control system at that stage, but eventually I got involved in other projects and abandoned it. After I met up with Derek and worked on *I'm O.K.* with him, we started talking about doing something more serious. At some point I brought up my prototype of *Aquaria*. Derek was skeptical at first, but after a bit he started thinking what it would be like to create an underwater game that had you exploring this huge fantastic world, with a myriad of creatures. Then we both started to get pretty excited.

What advice do you have for aspiring indie game developers?

Dream big, plan realistically. It's better to get something finished than to have the greatest idea and never be able to release it. Be prepared to work damn hard for your dream.

Every indie developer has something to say about the state of "the industry". Got any bones to pick or amusing anecdotes?

The only real bone I have to pick is with the people who pick bones! I think there's more constructive ways to make the industry a better place, like... making better games. There's nothing wrong with criticizing the industry, but I'd rather see it hand in hand

with creation. Personally, I'm happy that the mainstream industry is somewhat repetitive. It makes an indie's job easier!

Tell us a little about "*I'm O.K.*", the Jack Thompson parody game. Was that your first collaboration? How much impact do you think it had, both in terms of satire and for you professionally?

That was my first collaboration with Derek Yu. I wrote the music for the game and offered some input into the design. The programmer for it was a fellow named Chris Hanson. It was exciting for me, because Derek is such an enthusiastic guy, and a hard worker with a great sense of humor, so we were both pushing through a lot of the work very quickly and having a great time. I could tell that this was a guy that I'd want to work with again. I'm not sure how much impact it had on the community. I hope it made a lot of people laugh. I think ultimately it was a celebration of some of the games that we loved growing up.

What are your plans for the future of *Bit Blot*?

Lots of plans, but we can't divulge too much at this stage - we're just too busy finishing up *Aquaria*. But we know what we want to work on next. :) **NAG**





From left to right: Jannie van Tonder, Justin Robinson, Hendrik Maartens, Colin Rautenbach, Jonathan Upton, Geof Nienaber.

FOR THE LOVE

LISBON! PORTUGAL! SNUGLY NESTLED on the Western side of the Iberian peninsula, Lisbon has apparently been a port for over 3,000 years, though that depends on who you ask. There's no doubt, though, that a serious amount of time and history passed here, something made clear every time you slip on the ancient stone pavements smoothed out from countless feet trampling over them for centuries. In fact, in old Lisbon things are so ancient that the city's oldest Cathedral, nestled just down the hill from the event venue and right in front of the spot the buses dropped off participants, blended so much with the scenery that it looked downright ordinary. A minute or so's walk up the road and you'd arrive at a small entrance that opens up to a large, multi-storied events venue with windows overlooking Lisbon's Alfama harbour district. This is where the

first Packard Bell iPower Games took place.

This is also where South Africa's team got its ass kicked. Let's not mince words about it – when it came to sheer gaming caliber, the group were completely out-gunned. But they aren't bad gamers – the team of six players rose to the top of a gaming tournament held amongst Incredible Connection's staff, the retail chain being Packard Bell's exclusive stockist in South Africa. It's true that a much more skilled team could have gone over to represent the country, but they would hardly have done much better anyway. The top teams, such as Holland, Switzerland and Germany, sported some serious pro-gaming talent. The German team even included two of the best *Supreme Commander* on GPG. net. But that's not the point and it doesn't matter anyway. South Africa definitely had one of the most popular teams there. It

might have been due to respect for the long distance they traveled or it was perhaps the more endearing South African exuberance and excitable conversations that took place inside during matches and outside during much-needed smoke breaks. The bunch charmed everyone and everything, especially the gorgeous Portuguese women. Before the event all contestants were given information booklets, which included a few local phrases to help communicate your way to a beer, the hotel or politely saying goodbye. With the help of some locals, some team members managed to expand this lexicon with "can I buy you a drink?" and "I think your ass looks cute", to name a few.

But they were there to play games as well. Reality came crashing in as the Swiss team made quick work of the South Africans in *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* Things didn't get much better





OF THE GAME

from there, except that the whitewashes became fewer. Eventually South Africa changed its strategy to ignoring the artifact it was supposed to find and simply picking off the other team where- and whenever. It even caught the attention of the commentators, who noted that South Africa was so eager for frags "that they are even shooting their own team members". All of the teams played in one of two competition areas - one located in the smaller, cooler and less sensory-explicit upstairs room while the main stage downstairs - complete with lots of lighting, loud but interesting commentators and a mild sauna-like humidity - catered for the rest. Fortunately most of the South African matches were upstairs, but this didn't really improve their luck. After the S.T.A.L.K.E.R. competition finally came to an end, the *Battlefield 2142* games began. Here again our

team was outgunned, but at least they weren't alone. The teams from Portugal and Spain were having an equally tough time against the countries where gamers clearly have a lot of incentive to stay indoors. The next day things took a turn for the better when Jonathan Upton and Justin Robinson won a game of *Supreme Commander* against Portugal. This wasn't a sea-change, though. At the *Quake 4* competition on the final day, the team found out first hand just how heavily experienced some teams were at this particular game.

The irony is that while South Africa came last, the team members suited what the event was about. The event existed to promote the iPower, Packard Bell's new gaming PC. It certainly did an impressive job, pushing the four competition games for each player without a hitch. Not that pro gamers don't like high-end rigs, but they often prefer building their own. The South

Africans represented a much more accurate portion of the gaming population - guys who love playing games but can't spend every waking moment on them. This was evident with all the time our guys spent playing *Flatout 2* against each other (and anyone else for that matter) on the two iPowers in the VIP lounge.

It all had to come to an end eventually, with a tired but happy team departing back to SA. Both the trip and the event was a great success (the results and videos can be found on QuadV.com), despite British Airways losing nearly all of the team's baggage on the way there and only recovering most of it when they arrived at the airport for departure. When the team went on stage to get their last (eight) place prizes, there were hoots and cheers from the crowd. Besides, not everyone at the event can be the winners. Sometimes you just need people there for the love of the game. **NAG**





GROUND ZERO

by Toby Hudson

CORRUPTED POWER SUCKS ABSOLUTELY

HERE'S A SCENARIO THAT may be well known to many of you: A PC more than 2 years old is randomly freezing up, or rebooting. It vaguely seems related to temperature or CPU load, but all the CPU and component temp readouts are well within tolerances. Swapping parts doesn't seem to fix the problem, and all the parts taken out of the machine work fine in another machine with no problems. What could be wrong with it?

Hands up how many give up at this point and suggest either taking it to someone else or "just buy a new machine, this one's old!" Ok, now hands up how many though to swap out the power supply? I'm betting group A is bigger than group B.

Why is it that the power supply seems one of the most overlooked components when troubleshooting problems and upgrading machines? We're seeing a lot of new "bigger is better" type marketing from PSU manufacturers, 850 watts, 1000 watts, 1200 watts? How much is enough? What the hell do you need a kilowatt for when a quad core and 8800GTX can work on a decent 500 watt PSU?

Here's the thing. There's power, and then there's good power. It's fairly easy to throw generic watts into a box and get the system to boot. Getting it to run stable and for the long term however, is another matter. Power supplies have limited half lives, but few people notice this. Having been working with PCs (and I mean building, not just playing games on) for a decade and a half at this point, I've noticed that PSUs seem to decay over time. I've seen it in many machines including my own.

Just because that little bird's nest of wires sticking out of a lunchbox says it can deliver X watts doesn't mean it always will. As components inside the PSU age and corrode, its efficiency drops. And as that happens, it heats up more, which accelerates the process. Eventually it snowballs and either your power output falls off a cliff or your voltages go wandering into odd values nowhere near spec. In my experience, the average PSU has a half-life of about 2 years. That's pretty long, but if you consider some people get a cheap PSU with their case and they keep it through several rounds of upgrades, it's not surprising when suddenly that "gigantic" 400 watt "Pentium 4 certified" PSU keels over despite a Core 2 needing less juice. My "ludicrous" 650W Enermax PSU from January 2000 made it till roughly 2006 before suddenly it couldn't cope with a modest system. A

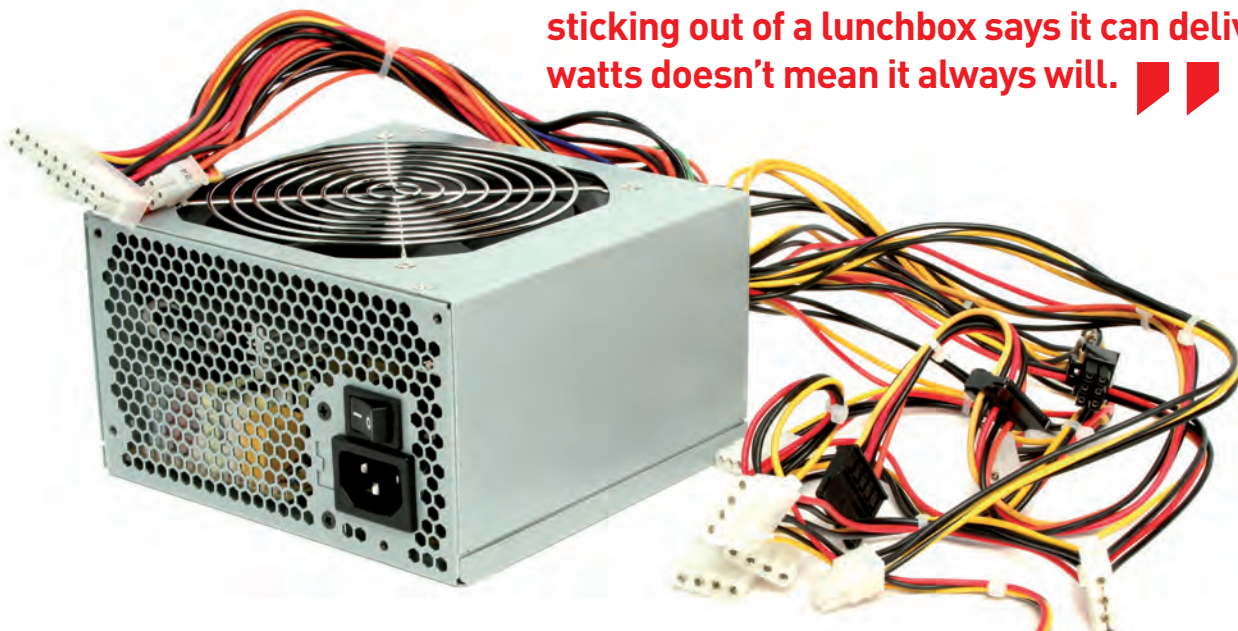
decent 400W PSU replacing it solved the entire problem of mysterious hangs and reboots.

Spotting power problems is a bit of a black art, as they can manifest as so many different symptoms. Since power supply efficiency varies with temperature, it can look like overheating. Random lockups and reboots can be caused by many things, but also be due to of insufficient voltage. Since bad grounding can corrupt data busses, it can even look like a software problem that causes file corruption (this happened to one of our servers). In general once a PSU is over 2 years old it becomes suspect whenever I start noticing system problems.

Now, some people might think that "problems" are obvious things like reboots and freezes. But it's a testament to the robustness of our modern technology just how well a PC can keep on going in the face of less than ideal conditions. There are layers of systems in place like ECC on caches and hard disks, protocols that auto-retry data transfers, and all sorts of interlocking systems that can keep the machine going even when things are less than optimal. If they weren't there, PCs would be as temperamental as they were in the 1970s, and we'd never have gotten clocks speeds much higher than where they started, let alone thousands of times that. So it may be a surprise to many people, but those random little hitches in Windows, and that vague "sluggish response" of a system may be lots of failsafes going off trying to compensate for problems. That structure is built like a pyramid, with things like autosave at the top and the switching PSU's chopper/inverter feedback loop at the bottom. When things get shaky down below, everything above feels it.

Don't believe me? Go find an old machine that hasn't had any hardware replacements in at least 3 years. Put in a modern name brand PSU. Watch what happens. You probably won't see it on benchmarks much, since this kinda change is going on at the analog level, it won't be readily apparent to software. Now I'm not saying everyone needs kilowatt units, far from it. But if you're going to go small or off-brand to save cash, be ready to replace that thing in a year or two. If you'd rather have something that will go 3+ years for the long haul, you'll probably want to invest in a name brand and about 50% overkill margin on your needs, otherwise what's stable today will be crashing tomorrow. **NAG**

Just because that little bird's nest of wires sticking out of a lunchbox says it can deliver X watts doesn't mean it always will.





HARDWIRED

by Neo Sibeko

GEFORCE 9800

RECENTLY THERE HAVE BEEN some rumours of NVIDIA's next generation part dubbed the GeForce 9800. This may or may not be the name of the GPU as it is virtually impossible to tell right now. However the name is hardly important and that is not what this is about at all.

The problems with the rumours are the specs that seem to accompany them. The specs are as follows; 65nm process GPU, over one billion transistors, GPGPU native, 512-bit memory interface, 1024MB GDDR4 graphics memory, DirectX 10.1 support, OpenGL 3.0 Support, EDRAM die for "FREE 4xAA, built in Audio Chip, built in tessellation unit... This at face value looks like a great chip and fantastic replacement for the G80.

However, on closer inspection it is obvious that the specifications are dubious and especially for a GPU that's supposedly out by Q4 2007 which starts in October. Hopefully by the end of this piece of writing the rumours will be laid to rest as just that and at worst they will be shown to be unfeasible without going into too much detail.

The GPU is at first rumoured to be a 65nm built GPU which is fair and most likely considering that TSMC (NVIDIA's chosen manufacturing partner) is producing 65nm based GPUs already and is ready with 55nm for Q2 2008. So there's nothing out of the ordinary there. The second specification however stating that the GPU will contain over 1 billion transistors is where the specifications begin to fall apart.

The primary motivation for a smaller process is cost savings which filter down from the IHV (NVIDIA in this case) right down to the consumers (us). For instance the current 90nm G80 GPU manufactured on a 65nm process becomes almost half the size physically. With that however the GPU would be significantly cooler, faster and cheaper in terms of how many GPUs come from each wafer, subsequently resulting in higher revenues for the IHV and lower purchasing prices for us.

To add at the least 319 million transistors to the core (as 1Billion transistors would suggest), would most certainly negate the size shrinking, cost savings the power consumption saving that are gained by the process shrink.

Then there is the matter of the EDRAM that supposedly allows for "free" 4xAA, which implies that 4xAA at any resolution would have no performance implication or a miniscule one at most much like how it works in the X-Box. Now, this may be a novel idea on a console and it does actually work quiet well, however on the PC it makes little to no sense at all to employ such a design. For one, the amount of EDRAM needed to cater for 4xAA at all resolutions playable on the PC is going to be ridiculous. The Xbox360 only has 10MiB of EDRAM that can only handle 4xAA at 640x480; at any of the higher resolutions AA is lost.

To show how ridiculous the idea of a dedicated EDRAM is on the PC platform where virtually nobody plays 640x480; and most 17" and 19" LCD's have a native resolution of 1280x1024. Just to cater for this resolution at a full 4xAA the supposed onboard EDRAM would require around 40MiB. Given that 10MiB of EDRAM is roughly 60-80million transistors, at the least the 40MiB required for the 1280x1024 would be 240million transistors! At this point it should be obvious how unreasonable this would be as the return vs cost ratio is so low the GPU is a loss, even on paper.

Keep in mind as well that this same EDRAM would be rendered null and void if even 8xAA were to be applied at the same or slightly lower 1024x768 resolution as the requirements as far as memory is concerned change instantly, becoming bigger than what the 240million transistor investment would be able to cater for.

Above are only a couple of points that invalidate the specification that is being flung around the net. If you want to have an idea of what may possibly make up NVIDIA's next part (8900 or 8850) keep reading NAG. We may not always be right, but we'll be close enough... **NAG**

However, on closer inspection it is obvious that the specifications are dubious and especially for a GPU that's supposedly out by Q4 2007 which starts in October.



ADSL Internet

ADSL Freestyle

Shaped from **R42.98/mo**

Unshaped from **R61.00/mo**

Flexible: You decide the cap

ADSL Express

Shaped from **R62.28/mo**

Unshaped from **R99.00/mo**

Hard capped: Best price per gig.

ADSL Premium

512 Kbps from **R1,200/mo**

1024 Kbps from **R2,300/mo**

Uncapped flat rate per month.

Website Hosting

FreeBSD (Unix)

Micro (10 mb space) **R19.00/mo**

Budget (100 mb space) **R89.00/mo**

Premium (1000 mb space) **R249.00/mo**

Windows 2003 Server

Budget (100 mb space) **R89.00/mo**

Standard (250 mb space) **R149.00/mo**

Corporate (2000 mb space) **R399.00/mo**

Includes email addresses with spam & virus blocking. Free domain registration on budget packages and above.

Dial-Up Internet

Dial-Up Express

56K from **R42.98/mo**

64K ISDN from **R51.75/mo**

128K ISDN from **R78.07/mo**

No contract required.

Choose Imagnet for:

- * outstanding customer care
- * excellent network performance
- * flexible, affordable internet services

All prices exclude VAT and are subject to change. Contact us or visit our website for more information on specific packages.

info@imagnet.co.za

086 111 1101

www.imagnet.co.za

WIN WITH



is giving away R8,000 worth of prizes to eight lucky readers.



To enter **SMS** the keyword **Speedlink** to **34110**
SMSes charged at R2 each
Competition closes **1 October 2007**
Prizes sponsored by Speedlink and Vidis Interactive



ASUS M2N32-SLI PREMIUM VISTA EDITION

SOME MAY BE WONDERING why this M2N32-SLI board is making an appearance in 2007, when it has been available since last year. Well, the answer is simple: this version of the board is the Vista edition. It may not seem like much at all, but it actually is in terms of features and performance.

ASUS has changed the motherboard layout to a more user-friendly design. The memory banks are now situated North of the CPU socket and the board layout has changed quite significantly, yet it retains largely the same name as last year's motherboard, which was slightly below average. This was due to a number of aspects: for example, the board's inability to overclock successfully or reach the 300MHz mark.

Fortunately, this has been rectified and this motherboard reached an impressive 355MHz HT speed with the link multiplier only set to 4x instead of the 3x, which was needed to reach more than 270MHz on the previous board. The power delivery of the Vista edition also seems to be better as the voltages stayed uniform even under heavy load.

Most impressive of all, however, the Vista edition board features an extensive tweaking menu, particularly for the memory, where you can tweak almost anything and everything: from the primary settings to drive strength, drive skew, termination voltage and a host of other settings. The extreme user will find these useful, and for upcoming processors, these options will allow users to extract that much more performance.

With everything left at the reference

settings, the M2N32 comes into its own. As mentioned in another review, because of the relationship between multiplier and memory speed on the AM2 platform, odd-number multipliers result in a lower speed in memory frequency than the selected speed. Therefore, without our 6000+ making use of a 15x multiplier, our DDR800 memory was left operating at 750MHz. Not too big a loss in frequency, but one we would rather do without. Having said that, however, the memory performance this motherboard displayed was exceptional, clocking in at over 10GB/sec! Lowering the multiplier and increasing the HT speed for our Team Xtrem DDR1000 RAM to operate at 1,066MHz [4-4-4-12], we were able to record more than 13GB/sec of bandwidth – impressive results by any measure. This turned out to be the best AM2 motherboard we have ever tested.

The main attraction of this motherboard, other than performance, is the inclusion of the sideshow screen, which is a small LCD that is connected via USB to a machine running Vista. This screen will allow you to navigate your media, receive news updates, and a host of other things. The uses for the sideshow are endless, and it's great that ASUS has included the screen, its remote control and software. Besides the sideshow screen, the true enhancements to the Vista edition of the M2N32 are on the motherboard itself.

The only fault we found with this board was that it took three attempts to get it to

HAG HARDWARE
AWARD



SPECS

CHIPSET	NVIDIA nForce 590 SLI
MEMORY BANKS	4 x DDR2-800/667/533 (8GB Maximum)
CPU SUPPORT	AMD Sempron/ Athlon 64, X2, FX, (AM2)
SLOTS	2 x PCI-E 16X, 3 x PCI-E 1x, 3 x PCI 2.2
CONNECTORS	8 x SATA 3Gb/sec, 6 x USB 2.0, 2 x Gigabit Ethernet, 1 x FireWire, 1 x eSATA

SCORE



BETTER THAN:

All other AM2 boards

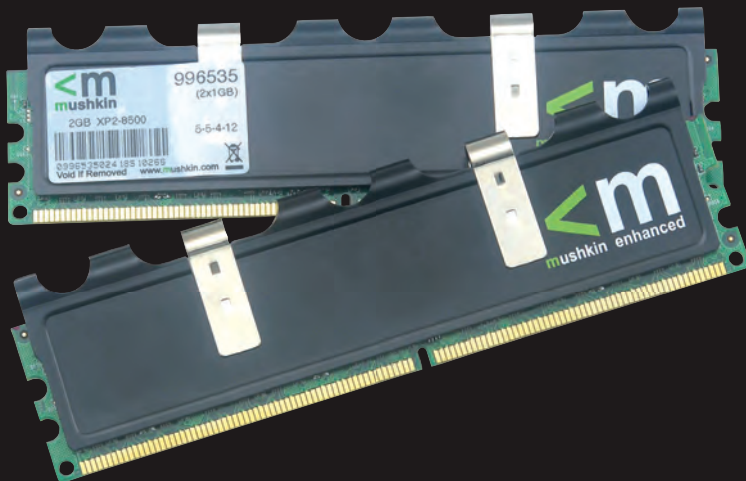
WORSE THAN:

Nothing

POST, which could have been a problem with this particular sample. After clearing the CMOS and updating the BIOS, all was well and the board started up every time without issue.

There aren't many (if any) AM2 boards that are better than the M2N32-SLI Premium Vista Edition available locally. If you were planning on making the move to the AMD Phenom later on this year, this board would be a good place to start. **HAG**

Neo Sibeko



MUSHKIN ENHANCED XP-2 8500 DDR2 RAM

MUSHKIN HAS BEEN QUIET as far as DDR2 performance RAM is concerned. Unlike in the DDR1 era where the name Mushkin was synonymous with high overclocking ability and high voltages, with DDR2 the company seems to have slowed down a little. That does not mean however, that they do not have any high performance RAM. In fact that couldn't be further from the truth.

We were fortunate enough to receive a set of the Mushkin's performance range XP2-8500. Kitted in the Mushkin standard black heat spreaders the RAM looks the part. What was of particular interest is that the heat spreaders are very light yet they seem to do a fantastic job at cooling the RAM, even at higher than standard voltages. Obviously one should always actively cool performance RAM. However, in the case of the Mushkin set it was never necessary even at the highest speeds with the maximum voltage applied (2.3V).

As with most performance RAM these days the Mushkin 8500 set makes use of the Micron D9GMH chips which are well known for their ability to attain high speeds and tight timings well beyond that of other chips from other manufacturers. With the set rated at a healthy 5-5-4-12 we installed the RAM on the Asus P5K-E motherboard and immediately set 1066MHz at 4-4-4-12 using just 2.0V. The system booted up fine with no issues and was stable through multiple runs of 3DMark06, SuperPi and Prime95. As impressive a feat as that was, we were confident that the RAM could perform even better, so the timings were further tightened to 3-4-3-9, but the speed was dropped to 800Hz. Once again the system booted up just fine, and made it all the way into Windows, however it failed Prime95 after 10 minutes and the RAM needed 2.1V to stabilize again.

Seeing as 3-4-3-9 is pushing the RAM to its limits, the RAM was then set at 4-4-3-9 and set to 1,000MHz (PC8000). At this setting the RAM proved stable and quiet fast. The same 2.1V was used and that's where the Mushkin set came into its own. The next milestone would be the 550MHz or 1,100MHz DDR mark. This speed proved to be a little difficult for the Mushkin set so we further increased the voltage to 2.2V and set the timings to a more reasonable 4-4-4-12... Without so much as a pause the RAM was capable of this speed and ran for hours on end

with no problem at all. Where it all came apart was at the 1,120MHz mark. The RAM was incapable of making the speed irrespective of the timings or voltage used. The RAM was just not capable of making the speed which was a little disappointing considering that the Mushkin XP-2 6400 set could reach this speed at 4-4-4-12. So while the 8500 set is rated for the higher speed, right at the end the DDR800 pair is a better set.

With that said though, not many people are comfortable with operating their RAM well beyond the specifications so the 8500 set just may be ideal for those individuals as to find the limits of this RAM is nothing more and a 10 minute affair compared to the DDR800 (which can take hours on end to tweak correctly). Given the fact that overall system bandwidth on our chosen Intel based test machine is determined predominately by the main board speed (FSB and its strap) the XP2 set was more than enough to reach the 9GB/sec+ mark required for high scores and impressive performance in games. At the given price it's hard to fault the XP2 PC-8500 set; it behaves much like many other D9GMH based dual channel kits, but has the added benefit of running cool and at relatively low voltages.

If you are after high performance DDR2 RAM the XP2 8500 set is worth taking a look at. If, however, you are willing to spend the time tweaking and playing around with various secondary timings and voltages, the DDR800 version of the Mushkin RAM may be a better set. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

SPECS

CHIPS	Micron D9GMH
RATED SPEED	DDR2 1,066MHz (PC8500)
TIMINGS	5-5-4-12
VOLTAGE	2.0V

SCORE

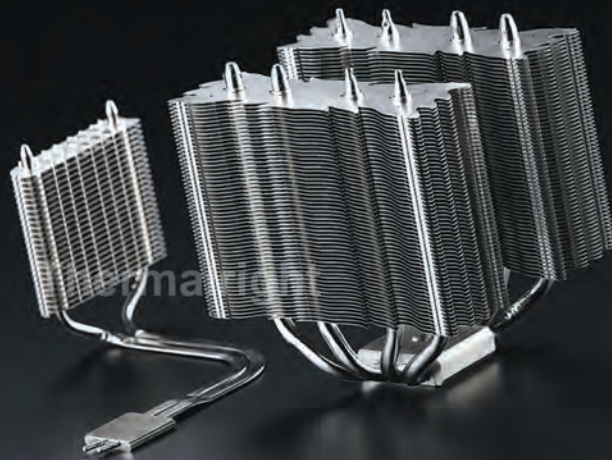


BETTER THAN:
Other higher performance PC8500 RAM
WORSE THAN:
Mushkin Enhanced XP2 PC-6400

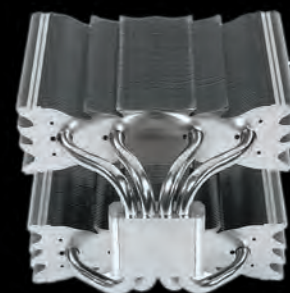
Thermalright

IFX-14 Inferno Fire eXtinguisher

Quench the fire in your computer system



Back-side heat pipe Cooler



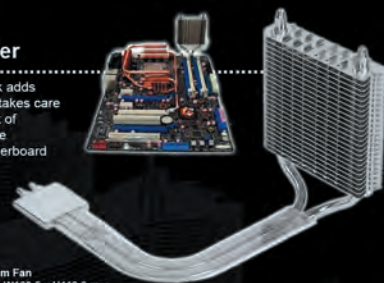
IFX-14 Heatsink Body

- * Larger surface area for heat dissipation
- * Designed for better air flow management to work with the heatsink fans and the air inside computer case
- * Optional to rotate the heatsink 90 degrees to best fit your system configuration
- * Multi-platform compatible backplate for installation on vast number and type of motherboard.

Weight: 790g (heatsink only)
Dimension: L146.2 x W124 x H161 mm (heatsink only)
Recommended Fan: All 120mm & 140mm Fan

IFX-14 Back-side Heat Pipe Cooler

Back-side dual heatpipe heatsink adds additionally cools CPU and also takes care of the heat coming from the back of the motherboard to extend the life expectancy and stability of motherboard



Weight: 130g (heatsink only)
Recommended Fan: All 80mm & 70mm Fan
Dimension (heatsink only): L134.5 x W163.5 x H112.6 mm



FRONTOSA
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

www.frontosa.co.za

JHB +27 11 466 0038 CT +27 21 551 4411



INTEL CORE 2 QUAD EXTREME QX6850

FINALLY THE 1333MHZ CPU'S have made a showing. Intel recently released their 6X50 range of CPUs which will eventually replace the 1066MHz Core2s we have taken a liking too. These new CPUs include the E6550, E6750 and the E6850 for the dual cores. Where quad cores are concerned Intel has so far (at least at the time of writing) only released the QX6850.

This may come as a surprise to some considering that the QX6800 was released within the last couple of months and that Intel already has a replacement part for it. However, it is important to keep in mind that the QX6800 was nothing other than a higher multiplier CPU over its predecessor, the 2.66GHz QX6700. With the QX6850, Intel has moved to a new stepping (mainly G0), a higher FSB and a higher clock speed.

In a general gaming environment, the QX6850 isn't significantly faster than the QX6800 or at least not by margins larger than what the internal clock speed differences would not be able to account for. That is, the performance gains are between 2.5% and 3%. In specialized programs that are multi threaded, the difference is much higher, sometimes delivering gains of up to 10% on the QX6800. This is where the higher FSB makes itself apparent.

What makes all of this possible beyond mere clock speed increases, is the change from a 266MHz to a 333MHz bus affects everything in the system in particular to where bandwidth is concerned. For instance on a P35 based motherboard, the memory throughput as measured by SiSoftware

Sandra 2007 SP2 is several hundreds of megabytes/sec faster on the QX6850 than on the QX6800, even for the same memory speed and timings. All of these gains brought about by the higher main board speed result in a more responsive system in almost all applications and as stated previously, results in small gains where games are concerned.

The above though is only telling half the story about the QX6850. What is most impressive about the CPU is in its ability to overclock. At first we had problems reaching 3.6GHz (400x9) irrespective of the voltage used, but it turned out to be that the CPU responds negatively to high voltages in particular to those needed to take a QX6700 or QX6800 to the same speed... At only 1.4V the CPU managed to reach the 3.6GHz mark and went on to make 4GHz at 1.49V... These types of results are seemingly common with the newer G0 stepping CPU's like the E6750 and E6850, however that ability to clock so well was not expected to hold true for a quad core CPU as well. Granted these clocks were achieved with water cooling; 3.9GHz at the exact same voltage was achieved using air cooling.

The QX6850 used for gaming, video rendering and other intensive applications makes for a brilliant CPU as it is the fastest CPU you can buy right now. Paired with two AMD HD2900XT cards or Nvidia GeForce 8800 SLI Ultra cards, the QX6850 was able to push the graphics cards quiet comfortably recording scores of just under 18,000 in 3DMark06 at the default 3GHz clock speed.

With the upcoming X38 chipset based motherboards, the QX6850 will most likely

perform even better than it does with the currently available 680i, 975, 965 and P35 based motherboards. As Intel refines its manufacturing process, the CPUs get better and the QX6850 sample we had is proof of their engineering prowess at its best. Able to clock better than most dual core variants of the Core2 family, the QX6850 is one CPU that will impress anyone from the hardcore gamer to the enthusiast who is looking for a CPU to break records with.

Whether you are a fan or not, if you are looking to build the fastest system around, the QX6850 is simply the best CPU money can buy. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

SPECS

CORE	Kentsfield
CORE CLOCK	3,000MHz
FSB	333MHz SDR (1333MHz QDR)
CACHE	8,192Kb (4,096KiB x 2)
NUMBER OF CORES	4

SCORE



BETTER THAN:
All other CPUs available
WORSE THAN:
Nothing



SONIC HIGH DEFINITION PLASMA

SO YOU ARE ON a budget, but you need some large-screen action for your next-generation games or movies. Maybe you just want a larger screen. Big first, resolution second. If that's the mantra in your heart, then perhaps going for a plasma screen is your best option. While a plasma screen isn't an excellent replacement for a proper LCD screen, it is a step above the standard CRT tube with its limited resolution and a touch better on your bank balance/debt record than getting a high-end HDTV of an equivalent size. Sonic manufactures various LCD and plasma models locally, including this beast – a 42" widescreen high-definition plasma screen that will push out higher resolutions than a standard TV. Using a Samsung panel, it is capable of reaching a resolution of 1024 pixels across, which is pretty adequate for high definition gaming purposes.

On the back there are several input options – a standard tuner jack, S-Video, two Component ports (which can double for Composite), S-CART, VGA and, somewhat inexplicably, an HDMI port. The latter makes little sense since HDMI's real power lies well beyond resolutions that this screen could hope to get. That said, the port is already on the PS3, will appear on the 360 and is starting to show up on newer motherboards, so its inclusion makes sense from a legacy point of view. Unlike previous Sonic models we've tried, this one is happy working with NTSC inputs, just in case you didn't

buy your console locally. An interesting and controversial design choice was making the two speakers separate from the unit. You would need to attach them and run wires between them and the main screen in the similar fashion you'd wire up a higher-end sound system. On the one hand this means you can add your own speakers to the unit, but on the other hand you'll probably run your sound source directly to your sound system.

If you are willing to compromise on true HD resolutions at a good price, this is an option worth looking at. An LCD of the same size will cost you at least R5,000 more.

At least. **NAG**

James Francis

SPECS

SIZE	42" (107cm)
RESOLUTION	1,024 x 768
PANEL	Samsung
CONTRAST RATIO	10,000:1
PORTS	HDMI, VGA, Component, S-Video

SCORE



BETTER THAN:

Spending a fortune

WORSE THAN:

Spending a fortune



PCI-EXPRESS TVIFM Capture Card



PCI EXPRESS

Universal Analog TVIFM Card

Internal PCI-Express (1x)
Stereo Sound / TV Tuner with FM
Support Video-In & Audio-In
Support Tele-Text & Time-Shifting
PC Power UP Scheduling (VideoMate E500 only)
Remote Control included



PCI EXPRESS

Universal Analog & Digital TVIFM Card

Internal PCI-Express (1x)
Hardware MPEG Encoding (VideoMate E800 only)
Support Analogue & Digital (DVB-T)
Support MCE in DVB-T
Stereo Sound / TV-Tuner with FM
Support PC Power-Up Scheduling
Support Video-In & Audio-In
Support Tele-Text & Time-Shifting
Remote Control Included



FRONTOSA
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

www.frontosa.co.za

JHB +27 11 466 0038 CT +27 21 551 4411

COOLER MASTER STACKER 830 NVIDIA EDITION



WITH THE FIRST CASE being SLI ready, Cooler Master celebrated this by revamping the old Cooler Master stacker 830 into the Cooler Master stacker 830 NVIDIA edition. However, being SLI ready for a case is not much of an achievement and what exactly was the upgrade from the old stacker 830 to the new NVIDIA edition? Let's dive deeper and see exactly what the case has to offer.

The first obvious upgrade from the Stacker 830 to the NVIDIA edition is the colour scheme. Launching right onto NVIDIA's favourite colour green with a front green LED 120mm fan and the NVIDIA badges on the front and side panels of the case. Other than a green look to the case nothing else has changed from the old to the new in terms of outside appearance. Having the case completely aluminum does keep the temperature down and the nice brush technique used all over the case does make it look very impressive and definitely gives the case extra credit. The case side panels and motherboard tray is kept attached to the case by hard plastic clips situated in various areas at the back of the case, this makes the case even more user and tool free friendly. The Side panels with their big open grid being great for ventilation also sit right next to the huge four holder fan rack, this fan rack can hold four 120mm fans or lower, the problem with the fan rack and the big open grid this case is looking at a very big dust problem, make sure to keep a can of compressed air somewhere close by.

However the case has got some nifty upgrades that should have been put onto the Stacker 830 from the start. Wheels: a case this size has to have wheels. Luckily

Cooler Master heard the pain of thousands of back-breaking crunches when their clients picked up the case and decided to make life easy by including a strong set of wheels with the case, along with these comes the HDD rack. This fits pretty snug at the roof of the case for people who want more than 4 hard drives. Installing your Hard drive at the roof of your case is easy but make sure to leave the top 5.25" bay open /in case you would like to remove it or check cable configuration. One would also have to get a extended SATA cable to reach the drive at the top of the case.

The case does come standard with a HDD chassis that settles at the bottom of the case. This chassis also has rubber bumpers on the inside of the chassis to reduce vibration noise.

Installation of this case was the best I have experienced with its removable MB tray, HD chassis and the ability to install your PSU from the back and one can install it upside down for easy cable configuration, plus with all of the open space in the case, installing became fast, easy and fun.

Along with other Cooler Master cases I have seen this case has lots of tool free areas, such as the CD/DVD bays the thumbscrew slots easy to remove front drive protectors and the removable motherboard tray. The case has plenty of clips all over the place to remove side panels, doors, fans and fan racks. The Cooler Master Stacker can also do what few other computer chassis can do; it can support BTX with simply case configuration.

This case is big, it's pretty and it's now SLI ready. Being just over £2000 makes it worth the price. If you want a quiet case, you are looking in the wrong place; the case is

NAG >>>>
HARDWARE
AWARD



SPECS

3.5" BAYS	4
5.25" BAYS	9
FAN MOUNTS	1 x 120x120x25mm front fan (LED); 1 x 120x120x25 mm rear fan (exhaust); Supports up to 9 x 120mm fans (optional); front fan x 3, top fan x 1, rear fan x 1, front fan x 3, top fan x 1, rear fan x 1, side fan x 4 (side fan tray can be installed with 14
PORTS	4 x USB 2.0 1 x FireWire 1 x Mic 1 x Speaker
MOTHERBOARD SUPPORT	E-ATX, ATX, microATX (can upgrade to BTX)
DIMENSIONS AND WEIGHT	250 x 536 x 638mm 16kg

SCORE



pretty much an open grid, even with the noise reductions on the HD chassis you will still hear your fans running. If you are smart and get quieter fans then you have nothing else to worry about other than the dust. If you do have the old version of the Stacker 830 then don't worry about getting the NVIDIA edition. You are not gaining anything monumental from this revised model. **NAG**



MICROSOFT PC WIRELESS CONTROLLER

RRP → R399 | Supplier → Microsoft | Website → www.microsoft.co.za | Brand → Microsoft

EVEN THOUGH MICROSOFT RETIRED its peripheral division, the legacy continued with the 360's controller. Once stand-alone USB versions of the gamepad became available, it gave PC gamers a good alternative as well, since the controller works natively on Windows, Vista in particular. But the much cooler Wireless controller has remained the steadfast property of the console until this package was released. The gamepad included is a 360 wireless model that will work on your console, so if you own both platforms you gain a controller. The real reason you want this package is the new PC wireless adapter, which plugs into USB and does all the detecting. While it wasn't tested, the 360 Wireless racing wheel will probably respond

to it as well. Drivers are included, giving you basic calibration tools and so on. Beyond that there are no frills: just an honest-to-God analog gamepad that works well and should give you a hand with those console ports and MAME games. You can also buy the wireless connector separately. **NAG**

James Francis

SCORE



BETTER THAN:

Most PC controller alternatives

WORSE THAN:

Nothing

MICROSOFT 360 WIRELESS NETWORK ADAPTER

RRP → R999 | Supplier → Microsoft | Website → www.microsoft.co.za | Brand → Microsoft

AT THIS POINT OF the march, if you own a 360 you must have noticed that it has an ethernet port in the back. You might have even taken that a bit further and slapped a chord between it and your network hub. A little bit of messing around in the network settings and you've probably gone online. Now if you haven't done any of that yet, you are missing out on a lot. But if you did, you've probably felt slightly agitated over yet another cable lying around everywhere. Besides, it's not as if network ports are bountiful on your average router. Obviously a wireless network option would be great, which is what this little gadget gives you. It neatly clicks onto the back of the 360 and uses that USB port as well.

The rest is simply changing the network settings to wireless and finding your network. Performance depends on your own wireless setup, but I had no problems playing online or streaming movies from another PC to the 360. **NAG**

James Francis

SCORE



BETTER THAN:

Cables everywhere

WORSE THAN:

Your own T1 line



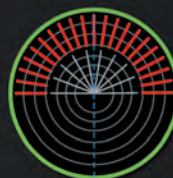
HARDWARE

RAZER™ DeathAdder™

HIGH PRECISION INFRARED GAMING MOUSE



APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF FRAMES SEEN WITH A SWIPE OF THE HAND



2.25x FASTER

THAN A STANDARD MOUSE

INCREASE YOUR SPEED + PRECISION

RAZER DEATHADDER™

STANDARD MOUSE

HAND MOVEMENT REQUIRED TO VIEW THE SCREEN

55% LESS MOTION

THAN A STANDARD MOUSE



ERGONOMIC RIGHT-HANDED DESIGN
COMFORT FOR LONG HOURS OF GAMING

1000HZ ULTRAPOLLING / 1MS RESPONSE
ULTRA FAST RESPONSE TIME

5 PROGRAMMABLE, ULTRA-LARGE NON-SLIP BUTTONS
WITH HYPERRESPONSE
LOW LATENCY BUTTONS WITH A GOOD GRIP

16-BIT ULTRA-WIDE DATA CHANNEL
FOR LATENCY-FREE INTERACTION WITH THE PC

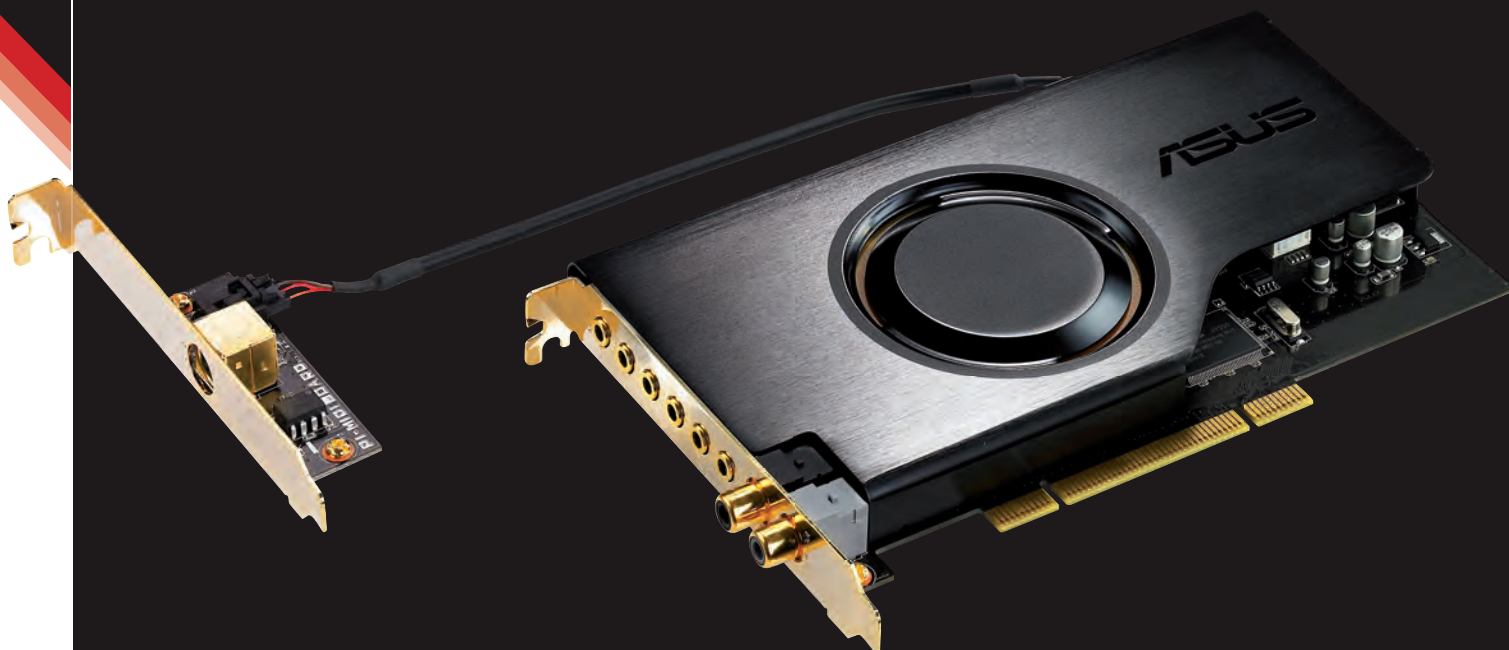
AWARD-WINNING ON-THE-FLY SENSITIVITY DRIVERS
SWITCH DPI SENSITIVITY WHILE GAMING



FRONTOSA
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

www.frontosa.co.za

JHB +27 11 466 0038 CT +27 21 551 4411



ASUS XONAR D2

FOR A LONG TIME, the soundcard market has been quiet. The brief flurry of progress between Ensoniq's release of the first PCI soundcard and the death of Aureal is long behind us, and aside from rudimentary increases in bit depth and sample rate, sound has remained relatively unchanged. For many, onboard "HD Audio" is "good enough", and Microsoft removing hardware DirectSound acceleration in Windows Vista is seen by some in the final nail in the coffin.

However, Asus does not share this view, and has decided to enter an area of the PC industry where few dare to tread. The Xonar D2 marks their first attempt at a discrete soundcard, and it really makes an impression. Especially the interesting feature of being able to "legally back up your protected music" via an onboard loopback system that can record analog output back to the card internally without resorting to patch cables. Of course Asus cautions users to respect copyrights, and the feature is for backup purposes only.

We ran the Xonar through an exhaustive series of tests including 3D gaming and music of a wide variety of types. For listening we used a pair of Sennheiser HD 280 Professional headphones, which have the rare qualities of dampening external noise by a factor of 1600 (-32dB), and being able to reach bass levels down to 8Hz.

The first thing you'll likely notice if you're upgrading from onboard audio is the lack of sound when nothing is playing. This is due to reduced EMI leakage and is one of the main reasons to favor an add-in soundcard. If you're spending this much on a soundcard

and you hear noise leakage, you've either got a broken card, or your PC is emitting enough radiation to make you glow in the dark. Onboard sound that doesn't have a leakage problem is rare, but we did find one in the MSI P965 Platinum with its Realtek ALC888S HD Audio. The Xonar had no problem completely obliterating that in sound quality, so we moved on to testing with 3D gaming.

Drivers were quite good, despite the presets wanting to enable Dolby Headphone encoding for most everything including games. We found everything except movies with specially-encoded Dolby Headphone soundtracks (the Xonar ships with a DVD sampler with some nice demos) produced annoying echoes when Dolby Headphone was on. Playing around with the 7.1 virtual speaker systems and other DSP options, we found the 7.1 expander combined with DTS Neo:PC to give the best spatial representation in games. It did particularly well at distinguishing near sounds from far ones instead of just having them positioned left, right, front, or back relative to the listener. Does it make a difference while gaming? Actually yes, we found it did improve spatial awareness of the game, which can be crucial in a fast paced deathmatch.

Then came the real test, comparing to the X-Fi Fatal1ty. In gaming the Xonar came out ahead in spatial cues, but doesn't support EAX versions beyond 2.0, which may be a bad or good thing depending on your opinion of arbitrary zone-based DSP overlays as a method for producing "3D" sound. As for music, the race was very close, but with both cards properly configured, we have to give the nod to the Xonar here. Music had more

NAG >>>>
HARDWARE
AWARD



SPECS

CHANNELS	7.1
SAMPLE RATE	192KHz / 24bit
SIGNAL TO NOISE RATIO	118dB
TOTAL HARMONIC DISTORTION	0.0004% (-108dB)
FREQUENCY RESPONSE	< 10Hz to 90kHz
PORTS	mic, line in, front, center/sub, rear, spdif in, spdif out, midi
INTERFACE	PCI
STANDARDS	Dolby IIx, Dolby Headphone, DTS Neo:PC

SCORE



BETTER THAN:

Creative Sound Blaster X-Fi Fatal1ty

WORSE THAN:

What the Aureal Vortex 3 would have been

definition, whether the X-fi had its Crystalizer option on or off. It was present at all sample rates, so we would attribute it to the Xonar's superior TI Burr-Brown D-A converters and more responsive amp. So if you're looking for the best in sound quality and aren't an acolyte of "environmental" audio, we've got a card for you. **NAG**

Toby Hudon



CANON POWERSHOT S5 IS

THE S5 REALLY CAME to my desk as the very nice end to a series of unfortunate events. I own the PowerShot S2, a camera I loved dearly until it decided to stop working just outside my warranty period. Now that might indicate that there is something wrong with Canon's hardware, but I refuse to believe it. The S2 is just too good a camera to have obvious and persistent manufacturing flaws. Alas, repairing it will be a costly endeavour and I'm apparently better off getting a newer model. That newer model will definitely be the S5. Canon has been incrementally improving the PowerShot series with every number iteration, giving a bigger view screen here, adjusting reaction speeds there and slowly molding this point-and-shoot model to one beautiful piece of hardware. To me the S5 is the culmination of all of that, especially since it boasts the two things the PowerShot series has always lacked – the ability to attach lenses without the use of some kind of attachment gadget, as well as an extra Flash on the top. This, in my mind, makes the PowerShot simply perfect. The robust settings – from very accommodating Auto and Pro modes right through to Manual – will leave you wanting little else (and

if you do, you might need to consider a camera far more orientated towards professionals). Throw in the nice video and excellent sound recorders, hefty zoom and reliable stabilizer and you have what I consider the best amateur camera money can buy. Alas, you will need to fork out extra for a proper memory card, because the paltry 32mb card included won't come close to cutting it. If only everyone could own a PowerShot – then there would never be terrible photos ever again. **NAG**

James Francis

SPECS

ZOOM	12x Optical
MAXIMUM RESOLUTION	8.0 Megapixels
STORAGE	SD Memory Card slot

SCORE



BETTER THAN:

Any point-and-shoot camera

WORSE THAN:

Something that costs more than R8,000

RRP → R5,300 | Supplier → Canon | Website → www.canon.co.za | Brand → Canon

ZALMAN
COOL INNOVATIONS

Life is quieter with Zalman

ZM-MFC2

Real time display of power consumption



Four sensors for temperature monitoring and display
Monitoring and control of one PWM fan & three standard fans
Alarm system to notify non-operation of any of the fans
Fan's operation status indicated with animated propeller images

ZM-MFC1 Plus

Comprehensive Control of Cooling Performance and Noise



6 Channel Multi Fan Controller
Aluminum Front Panel
Fast & Easy Access to Fan RPM Control
Color & Intensity Variable LEDs



FRONTOSA
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

www.frontosa.co.za

JHB +27 11 466 0038 CT +27 21 551 4411

PSUs Roundup

There was a time not too long ago when a 500Watt PSU was considered to be an incredible amount of power. That was not ten, but three to four years ago. Since then we've had CPUs and graphics cards mainly draw considerable amounts and the idea of 1KW unit is no longer considered ludicrous but is a reality. With AMD having released the HD2900XT as the first graphics card to feature the PCI-E 2.0 power connector specification (8-pin instead of 6) it is an indication of what is to come. So we gathered a few PSU's from various manufacturers all featuring the new connector type and put them under stress in the form of a high end machine comprising of a Quad Core QX6850 CPU, 2x 8800Ultra GPUs, 2GB of RAM and 3 Hard Drives. Not only was this system operated at the default settings but each graphics card was overclocked to 690MHz, the HD2900XT cards were made use of as well both at default and overclocked settings. Unlike with most other components in the PC there needs not be one winner, but there is however likely to be one PSU more suited to your needs than the others. Read on and find out which one.

COOLERMASTER REALPOWER PRO 1000W

Supplier → The Prophecy Shop | Website → www.prophecy.co.za | RRP → R2,333

The CoolerMaster has to be said to be amongst the best PSUs available locally. Sure it is not the best in any one discipline but it does well enough in all aspects to make it suitable for the casual gamer right up to the hardcore enthusiast who needs maximum power and stability. The Real Power unit is not going to win any awards for looks as its gloss black finish has become standard these days. The biggest complaint about this unit is the lack of a power switch. For this price one would expect to be able to power on and off the unit without having to yank the power cord from the back of the unit. Past that however the CoolerMaster unit delivers solid reliable power and proved more than capable of handling the SLI configuration through multiple 3DMark06 runs. Featuring a world's first 6 +12V rail configuration, the cooler master would seemingly be a gut above the rest however right at the edge, when the graphics cards are overclocked to the 690MHz mark and the memory operating at 2.4GHz, this can get a little unstable. This is not the PSU's inability to deliver sufficient power, but the fact that each of the 12V rails is only 18A. Fixing this situation is relatively simple as all it requires is that one uses the 6-pin PCI-E connector coming from the 8-pin line; however fewer 12V rails with a higher

current would have made this an even better PSU than it is. With that said, for the price the Real Power Pro 1000W well worth the purchase and will last you years on end. Superior build quality and all the safety standards you can think of make this a reliable almost professional grade PSU. Some may lament the lack of modular cabling, but the lack of such a cable management system gives this PSU even better overall power delivery than the other 1KW unit in this roundup.



SPECS:

Fan(s): 1 x 135mm
Efficiency: 85% (850Watts continuous)
12V Rail(s): 6x18A
Connectors: 24-pin motherboard, 4/8-pin +12V CPU, 8-pin PCI-E (x2), 6-pin PCI-E (x4), S-ATA(x8), 4-pin Molex (x6), 4-pin Floppy (x2)
Price per Watt: R2.33/1W
Rating: 4/5

SILVERSTONE STRIDER 1000W

Supplier → Aleet Distribution | Website → www.aleet.co.za | RRP → R3,077

Since almost all manufacturers have a 1KW unit, it was only a matter of time until Silverstone introduced their own and they have done a stellar job at that with the Strider 1KW. As one would expect with any name brand PSU, it features all the safety specifications and standards compliance available in consumer level PSUs to date. One highlight feature of the Strider PSU is the dual +12V rails. These are not timid 20 or 25A rails, but full 35A rails making the Strider 1KW and its slightly less powerful counterpart the 850, the strongest when it comes to power delivery to the graphics cards. Contrary to popular belief or marketing schemes, multiple low current 12V rails are not better than a couple or a single powerful rail. This was very evident in that the Strider 1K did not exhibit any difficulty at all in powering the test system even with the graphics card fully overclocked and the system placed under massive amounts of strain. This alone makes up for the overzealous cable management system that enables one to even remove the 24/24-pin motherboard connector. Silverstone has done a great job in insuring that the Strider is a capable high end unit, but unfortunately is not able to match the likes of the Coolermaster Real Power Pro 1KW when it comes to efficiency, MTBF numbers and general operation specifications. While these are on paper only, the 80% efficiency of the PSU and



maximum 1.1KW power output compared to the 1.2KW of the Coolermaster is likely to deter would be buyers even if the numbers turn out to be more academic than anything else. With the given price though, there's no reason to not consider the Strider 1KW in particular for the fantastic dual 35A +12V

SPECS:

Fan(s): 1 x 135mm
Efficiency: 80% [800Watts continuous]
12V Rail(s): 2x35A
Connectors: 24-pin motherboard, 4/8-pin +12V CPU, 8-pin PCI-E (x2), 6-pin PCI-E (x4), S-ATA(x6), 4-pin Molex (x6), 4-pin Floppy
Price per Watt: R3.07/1W
Rating: 3/5

ANTEC TRUEPOWER 850 QUATTRO

Supplier → Frontosa | Website → www.frontosa.co.za | RRP → R2,296

Antec is no stranger to PSUs and most certainly expert when it comes to quality products. The Antec TruePower 850 is no different when it comes to either. Where style is concerned the Antec unit is by far the most stylish unit featuring two racing stripes in yellow. While this means nothing as far as power delivery, it does add to the aesthetics of the unit and works quiet well with the matt black finish of the PSU housing. Antec has not gone overboard with this unit; it features a single 80mm fan at the rear which takes care of the component cooling within the PSU. The cable management system is neat, as the plugs are situated at the bottom of the PSU leaving the honeycomb grill undisturbed which aids in keeping the unit cool. Where power delivery is concerned the Antec unit was quiet surprising in that it delivered and powered the overclocked system without much issue despite it having only 4 18A +12V rails, this seemed to be no problem for the unit. Switching over to the Crossfire configuration did prove a little taxing as we did experience a few slowdowns with all drives plugged in, however with only the motherboard, graphics cards and one hard drive installed the system performed just fine capable of matching both 1KW units in this roundup. Where Antec has gone astray is in the stating of the available power of this unit. It is claimed to be at least 80% efficient at 20%, 50% and



100% loads, but also claimed to deliver a continuous 850Watts. This was amusing at first but in all honesty is misleading and something worth watching out for. Other than that the Antec unit is a great high end PSU suitable for enthusiasts and gamers with multi GPU configurations.

SPECS:

Fan(s): 1 x 80mm
Efficiency: 82% [697Watts continuous]
12V Rail(s): 4x18A
Connectors: 24-pin motherboard, 4/8-pin +12V CPU, [6+2-Pin] PCI-E (x2), 6-pin PCI-E (x2), S-ATA(x8), 4-pin Molex (x9), 4-pin Floppy (x2)
Price per Watt: R2.70/1W
Rating: 4/5

ENERMAX INFINITI 720

Supplier → Frontosa | Website → www.frontosa.co.za | RRP → R2,500

The Enermax unit here is the PSU with the lowest rating, however don't let that fool you for a moment. This here would have been the best unit in the roundup by far had it been an 800Watt or higher. Starting from the brushed black finish, to the sleeves on the cables, the Infiniti oozes quality. For outright appearance in terms of style, it is no match for the Antec but in almost all other respects it's a better PSU. Two 28A+12V rails and a third 30A rail make sure that the Enermax is capable of putting out more direct power than everything else other than the two Silverstone units. Rated at only 720Watts, the Infiniti was capable of powering the system overclocked and at default settings. This was particularly impressive because all the components of the system were plugged in and not once did we experience a shutdown, a reboot or any other anomaly associated with power problems. The downside to this PSU is that it only features one PCI-E 8-pin connector which is no good for those who would employ a crossfire configuration, but perfect for current SLI implementations. Packed in a tight compact chassis the unit is suitable for the smaller cases as well, making it the most universal PSU in this roundup. The level of quality of this unit cannot be put into a few words, from the attention to detail to the specifications that Enermax includes with the unit, it all adds to a great product. While all the other PSU's



are given MTBF hours in excess of over 100,000, they do not stipulate at what load or temperature. The Infiniti unit however states this clearly as 70% load and at 50°C. The other PSU's only indicate number of hours and that could be anywhere from a 20-25°C operational temperature, which is an unnaturally low temperature for a PSU. The Infiniti is a Fantastic PSU, just a pity about its price however.

SPECS:

Fan(s): 1 x 135mm
Efficiency: 82% (590.4Watts continuous)
12V Rail(s): 2x28A, 1x30A
Connectors: 24-pin motherboard, 4/8-pin +12V CPU, (6+2-Pin) PCI-E, 6-pin PCI-E (x2), S-ATA(x9), 4-pin Molex (x9), 4-pin Floppy (x2)
Price per Watt: R3.47/1W
Rating: 4/5

SILVERSTONE STRIDER 850W

Supplier → Aleet Distribution | Website → www.aleet.co.za | RRP → R2,129

The Strider 850 is Silverstone's second entry into this roundup. It is identical to the 1KW unit in all respects except that it comes in at 850Watts and a much better price tag. This may not seem like much at first but it is worth noting that the 850 unit was as capable as all the other units in the test. It managed to power the overclocked SLI and Crossfire configuration with no qualms at all. There isn't much to fault this unit on at all. Where noise is concerned it is most certainly the loudest, but that is a small sacrifice when weighed against the power delivery and the dual 35A +12V lines it provides. The cable management system is no different to the 1KW unit, as it doesn't really minimize clutter but works to somewhat negate the power delivery of the brilliant 12V lines. Another great aspect of this PSU is the length of the cabling, allowing the power connectors to reach anywhere and comfortably too. Between the CoolerMaster unit and the Silverstone there lies the best value in this roundup where power vs. price is concerned. However for sheer power delivery and pricing the Strider 850 is the best unit in this roundup, beating out all the others and is undoubtedly the winner here. At the very top where the CPUs are reaching the 5GHz mark and the graphics cards are overclocked well beyond the 800MHz mark, this PSU may fail, but then again at that point you're likely to need a 1.2KW



SPECS:

Fan(s): 1 x 135mm
Efficiency: 80% (680Watts continuous)
12V Rail(s): 2x35A
Connectors: 24-pin motherboard, 4/8-pin +12V CPU, 8-pin PCI-E (x2), 6-pin PCI-E (x4), S-ATA(x6), 4-pin Molex (x6), 4-pin Floppy
Price per Watt: R2.50/1W
Rating: 5/5

CONCLUSION:

With only five PSUs in the roundup one would assume that finding an outright winner would be easy, however that is not the case. All the PSUs here are of exceptional quality and each of them bring their own unique features that separate them from the rest. Be it price, power delivery or aesthetics. If one must pick a PSU for the win it would have to be the Strider 850Watt, followed closely by the CoolerMaster Real Power Pro 1000, then the Infiniti 720 if only because of its high price. In truth if you bought any of the PSUs chances are it would last you years on end as they are all winning products.

unit or two PSUs. If you are in the market or need to move up from a 500 or 600 watt unit at the same time don't want to break the bank, you should seriously consider the Strider 850.

games

Hi-Tech

Search



Hundreds

of
games
available
every day

• Buy • Sell • Swop
• **PLAY**

JunkMailonline
YOUR KING OF CLASSIFIEDS

gaming

Your biggest ^ classified
community

www.junkmail.co.za

TIBERIUM WARS PART 1 OF 3

MILITARY ACADEMY

REINFORCEMENTS HAVE ARRIVED!

WELCOME BACK, COMMANDER! THIS tripartite briefing has been prepared for your eyes only, to ready you for the harsh realities of Tiberium-infested battlefields. To facilitate its digestion, this information will be presented in three sessions, each further subdivided into contextual segments. This first session will introduce you to the following:

- Fundamental concepts – basic training
- Opening moves in a battle (early game)
- GDI-specific information

The next session will present intermediate-level military theory, middle game tactics and Nod specifics. The final session will detail advanced concepts, ways to handle long battles, and an analysis of the Scrin.

BASIC TRAINING

There are few hard and fast rules, but those few that exist are crucial.

1. If you are not expanding your economy, you are falling behind!

War is a resource-hungry endeavour – falling behind in the resource race means lagging in terms of developing one's war machine. In practical terms, what this means is that, for most of the game, at any given time at least one of your production queues needs to be creating resource gathering – be it a Refinery or a Harvester, or founding an expansion base. Expand, expand, expand!

2. If you are not expanding your infrastructure, you are falling behind!

A huge income is useless if all it results in is an accumulated fortune, rather than an army. It is important to be constantly upgrading your facilities – once income starts running away from you, it is time to find ways to spend it – additional War Factories or other production facilities, surplus power plants, more advanced technology (in the form of tech structures such as the Command Post and the Tech Center). The tricky part here is to carry on developing even while churning out units and commanding battles – it is very easy to get too focused on one task, to the detriment of others. Don't lose sight of the forest for the trees!

3. Whenever possible, be the one choosing where the fight takes place.

Another way of saying this is: be the one doing the baiting/luring, rather than the dupe being lured. Often, it will be advantageous to draw an enemy force into confrontation near your base defences, which will give you the edge in terms of firepower. Other times, you want the fighting to take place in your enemy's base, so that collateral damage is inflicted on it.



4. Don't be lazy!

Just like over-micromanaging, this is another common pitfall. It can be tedious to, for example, make infantry and garrison surrounding buildings, or to counter garrisoned structures by hanging back and making the appropriate units for the job, but these are exactly the kinds of things you should be doing. If an opponent's base defences are weaker on the flanks, it is worth taking the slightly longer way around to attack there, rather than hitting the concentrated frontal defences. This may sound obvious, but you'd be surprised how often players don't bother, or are too impatient, and end up taking heavier losses than necessary.

5. Protect your inner base!

This cannot be stressed enough. Too many commanders build up an almost impenetrable front, or sometimes even a perimeter. However, if the heart of your base is vulnerable, a sneak attack can catch you by surprise and cripple you – for example, an airdrop, or Drop Pods. Due to the very nature of sneak attacks, your inner defences don't have to be particularly heavy – just have a variety – some anti-infantry ordnance, some anti-armour, anti-air, however, should be respectable, as often deep surgical strikes take the form of air-strikes or airborne incursions.



6. Information is power!

This means that you should, whenever possible, be seeking out intelligence about your opposition. In the early game, it is a good idea to produce a couple of your cheapest infantry unit and send them out scouting. Yes, they will most likely die, but the knowledge they will provide will help you make long-term decisions. Should they spot the enemy but avoid detection, they can always, if the terrain supports this, be garrisoned in a nearby structure. There is a psychological aspect to this: when players see garrisoned structures, they tend to stay away from them until they have at their disposal building-clearing units. The natural tendency is for players to overestimate the strength of garrisons, and this will make them more conservative in their actions, which can be turned to your advantage (by, for example, fortifying an area just behind your garrison, and out of your opponent's line of sight, so spring a nasty surprise on them when they finally venture forth.)

OPENING MOVES

An efficient initial build order is critical. A suboptimal build order will result in a "crashed economy" (a period of time when expenses have exceeded income and the player's capital is exhausted, necessitating a wait for resources to come in), or in slower development than that of the opposition. In Command & Conquer 3, unlike many other real-time strategy titles, there is no single optimal build order. In fact, how you should proceed in the early game depends very much on the size of the map, and the distribution and type of nearby resources.

On large maps, particularly those with abundant resources, it is a good idea to build a Crane (or equivalent) first, followed by a Power Plant and Refinery on the two construction queues. From then on, it is vital to keep adding to harvesting operations vigorously, as the double construction queues will devour your credits.

On a smaller map, it is generally best to open with a Refinery (the Construction Yard provides sufficient power for one Refinery) and a Surveyor (or equivalent), followed by a Power Plant. Then, if there are important neutral structures to capture nearby, such as Tiberium Spikes, you can pop up a Barracks and start training engineers, followed

by a War Factory. The Factory's first unit should usually be a harvester. Next building: Refinery. Three harvesters on a Tiberium patch is close to optimal – the money comes in quickly, but the patch isn't depleted too quickly. The early surveyor here will give you an early expansion. Don't be afraid to expand early – doing so will accelerate your economy, as well as giving you valuable territory, and flexibility in building locations.

There is an interesting, and more advanced, build order that can be tried. First building: Crane. Then, TWO Refineries, simultaneously. Once these are placed, power them down so that the Power Plant you build is built at full speed. Place it, power the Refineries back up, and start on a War Factory and a second Power Plant. Thereafter you will find that you can tech up very quickly, and resources come in quickly. This build order's weakness is that it can be somewhat vulnerable to an aggressive early rush, and it also risks giving up the chance of capturing Tiberium Spikes early, or pumping out early infantry. However, it can lead to an overwhelming technological advantage in the middle game...

GDI OPERATIONAL DOCTRINE

The Global Defence Initiative, with its access to global international funding and research, fields some of the most advanced firepower – "shock and awe!" That said, the military approach is fairly traditional, even "imperialistic". Units are characterised by toughness and heavy armaments. Nevertheless, this does not mean that GDI's forces lack mobility. Mobility is key in military engagements, and over-reliance on slow but powerful units can lead to being outmanoeuvred. An often underrated unit is the Pitbull. Although it is soft and, therefore, easily killed, it packs rockets that are very strong against aircraft, and good against armour and buildings. It is also, most importantly, very cheap and quick to build, and extremely fast-moving; it can also detect stealth units. Strike forces of these can be fielded quickly in the early game, and sent harvester hunting. They also make excellent scouts, being able to explore an area and retreat from enemy forces with little risk of being overtaken. Another highly mobile unit, albeit not as fast as the Pitbull, is the APC. GDI has a distinct advantage when trying to capture enemy buildings with engineers, as

they can hitch a ride on APCs, getting to their target area much quicker and being afforded significant protection from anti-personnel ordnance. APCs also make excellent vehicles for snipers, as well as rocket infantry. Zone troopers can also fire from inside an APC, but they tend to be tougher on their own, as well as able to use their jump-jets, while on foot.

Don't neglect the airlifting ability that becomes available to most GDI units once an airfield has been built – these can also be used to deploy engineers deep into an enemy base. Speaking of airfields, the Orcas are an excellent counter to heavy units such as the walkers available to the various factions – Juggernauts, Avatars and Annihilator Tripods.

When attacking with Mammoth Tanks, be sure to take along a Rig or two – the Mammoths are expensive, therefore valuable, but slow, so can't easily return to base for repairs keeping a (deployed) Rig nearby will extend the life of your precious Mammoth Tanks, as well as adding a small amount of firepower.

In the next briefing, you will be instructed in middle game skills, more advanced concepts than were covered in this session, and specifics about the insidious Brotherhood of Nod.

Dismissed! **NAG**

MCV RUSH

On very small maps, once a crane has been deployed, the MCV can be sent into the enemy base. When it arrives, it is best to have a Barracks ready for deployment, and essential to have an anti-infantry turret ready for deployment, to prevent engineer counterattacks. Scrin has the added advantage of being able to deploy a Lightning Spike if a Nerve Centre has been erected. To counter this: build anti-infantry turrets, to foil engineers, and train engineers to try to make the MCV rush backfire in the worst possible way!



CGS REGION 1: THE END OF THE BEGINNING

OF ALL THE QUESTIONS surrounding satellite broadcaster DirecTV's decision to launch its own televised gaming league – the Championship Gaming Series – the most important was simply: would it work? Was western television really ready for e-sports? Concerns about the scoring system, the draft picks of the general managers, the games chosen or the rules would all be irrelevant if the CGS never made it to a second season.

For the moment things seem to be going well, and it is partially due to the producers' smart choice to focus on the players as much as on the games. All of the people involved are having the time of their lives, and though the production still feels clumsy and staged at times, the emotions and aspirations of these players are sincere – and infectious.

How could it be any other way? As recently as last year, the prospect of being a professional gamer was impossible for all but a handful worldwide. Now sixty of them are living on a beach resort in Los Angeles, earning \$30,000 a year and competing live on television from a dedicated, state-of-the-art studio. And that's just North America – the world finals are on track for November this year. The sheer pace with which DirecTV have moved on this venture has surprised everyone, and completely changed the way we look at competitive gaming.

For those readers new to the CGS, it is important to understand how the controversial scoring system works. Each team – or franchise – is headed by a General Manager, who is responsible for drafting, training and overseeing his or her players. The franchise itself is comprised of a *Counter-Strike: Source* team, a *FIFA '07* player, two *Dead or Alive* 4 players (one male, one female) and a tandem of *Project Gotham Racing 3* drivers. The players for each game then face off against their counterparts from the opposing franchises.

Now, here's where it gets interesting. Instead of simply recording individual wins and losses, each point, round or goal scored during the various games is added to the franchise's overall match

total. For *Counter-Strike*, eighteen rounds are played. For *Dead or Alive*, the game ends when one player wins five rounds. *FIFA* is based on two four-minute halves where each goal scored (including penalty shootouts) counts as a point. *Project Gotham Racing* awards five points for a win, three for second place and one for third. At the end of the match, the franchise with the most points – not wins – is declared victorious. Thus, it is theoretically possible to win only one out of five matchups but come out on top overall. The system is to ensure that every point counts, and to allow for dramatic comebacks late in the matches.

All the current fuss has been about the Region 1 Season Finale, held in late July, which saw the dominant Chicago Chimera claw their way back from a 4:12 deficit to win the championship 22:21 against surprise underdogs, the Carolina Core. Leading up to the climax, the six franchises competed in a gruelling regular season of twelve matches each. They were ranked overall according to win-loss ratio, followed by points for and against, with the top four proceeding to the playoffs.

Two things quickly became obvious as the season progressed. Firstly, just one weak link was enough to derail an entire franchise, but the presence of a star player wasn't always enough to make up for it. Los Angeles Complexity and Dallas Venom, the two bottom-ranked franchises, learned this lesson the hard way. Despite having far and away the best *Counter-Strike* team, Los Angeles suffered several heavy defeats thanks to their *DOA* Female player, Megan "Belle" Ceder, who won only two rounds the entire season (one of which because her opponent pressed the start button by accident). And in a similar fashion, *DOA* Male poster-boy Manny "Master" Rodriguez, was unable to save the Dallas Venom from finishing in last place.

The second thing everybody noticed was that *Project Gotham Racing* was pivotal. Chicago's GM, Brian Flander, picked up a virtually guaranteed seven points per match when he drafted the unstoppable duo of Wesley "Ch0mpr" Cwiklo and Jason "Jason-X" Exelby, setting the pace for the entire league.

Going into the playoffs, however, the slate of the regular season was instantly wiped clean. All that mattered was one night, and one result. Chicago went up against the New York 3D, a team they had already played three times. The first two encounters had been walkovers for the Chimera, but the third had brought a surprise one-round win for 3D, leading New York fans to pray that the momentum would carry them through. On the other side of the bracket, the impressive San Francisco Optx was to face the team considered by many to be the weakest (at least on paper) – the Carolina Core.

In the first semi-final, history would only just fail to repeat itself as this time it was the Chicago Chimera who edged out the win (25:22). In the second the result would surprise spectators across the board, with San Francisco failing at several crucial points against a rapidly improving Carolina. The Core went on to win 22:19.

In truly historic fashion, this meant that the two worst *FIFA* players in the league, Chimera's Andrew "Anomaly" Brock and Core's Nick "Peekay" DePalmer, would end up playing each other in the final. The significance of this was that the scores were



Rank	Franchise	Wins/Losses	Points For/Against
1.	Chicago Chimera	8 - 4	293 - 247
2.	San Francisco Optx	7 - 5	286 - 257
3.	Carolina Core	6 - 6	273 - 274
4.	New York 3D	6 - 6	266 - 282
5.	Los Angeles Complexity	5 - 7	246 - 279
6.	Dallas Venom	4 - 8	257 - 285



likely to remain close. In fact, that was more or less how it looked for all of the games: Chicago and Carolina were both strong and weak in the same areas, meaning the match could go either way.

Yet when the games started, the Core came out with a fury never before seen in the CGS. Carolina's Kat "Mystik" Gunn started things off with a quick and painful 5:2 win over Chicago's Marjorie "Kasumi Chan" Bartell in *DOA Female*, followed by a 2:0 upset win for Peekay in *FIFA*. By the time the league's leading *DOA Male* player, the legendary Ryan "Offbeat Ninja" Ward, stepped into the arena, things were not looking good for Chicago. The Chimera's Jeremy "Black Mamba" Florence, while no slouch himself, just couldn't keep up with Offbeat's signature rock-solid defence and perfect counter-throws. Offbeat took the match 5:2, giving the Core the cushion they knew they needed, with *Counter-Strike: Source* and *Project Gotham Racing* still to come.

All the Core's CS team needed to do was

keep it close, but that proved to be more difficult than it sounded. After trading rounds back and forth in the first half, Chimera took their game up a notch in the second, winning out with a massive 13:5 spread. It was what CGS commissioner Andy Reif, not to mention everybody watching, had been hoping for. The scores were tied at seventeen a piece, and there was only one game still to be played.

Because of the PGR point structure, the only thing that would matter was who won the race. Even with both second and third places a team would still finish one point behind. So it was expected that the Core's drivers, Joe "Phantom" Tackett and Brent "Rex" Dimapilis, would try to crash Chimera's drivers out of the race, despite claiming in a pre-match interview that they intended to win on speed alone. The bluff almost worked.

The reason it didn't was Jason-X. From his clear vantage point in third place, he saw second-place Rex lining up to swerve across and knock Ch0mpr out as he took a corner.

Jason shouted to his teammate, who slammed on the breaks just at the right moment, watching Rex hurtle across his screen, hit the opposite wall and take himself out of commission. From there on it was Chimera all the way, with Ch0mpr building up a lead of almost 4 seconds. Knowing that first place was all that mattered, Jason-X then hung back to delay the Core's drivers, ultimately getting crashed out but ensuring that Ch0mpr had a clear run to the finish line – and a momentous triumph for the Chimera. **NAG**

Game	Chicago Chimera	Score	Carolina Core
DOA Female	Kasumi Chan	2:5	Mystik
FIFA '07	Anomaly	0:2	Peekay
DOA Male	Black Mamba	2:5	Offbeat Ninja
CS: Source	Chimera	13:5	Core
PGR 3	Ch0mpr/Jason-X	5:4	Phantom/Rex
Total		22:21	

ARENA 77 STRIKES BACK: RAGE 2007

www.thecgs.com

THE FURORE SURROUNDING THIS year's fated Electronic Sports World Cup qualifier left an entire community in disarray, with several top players retiring from competitive gaming as a result. Arena 77, the event organisers and long-time supporters of e-sports in South Africa, released a statement vowing never again to host a tournament unless the prizes were guaranteed from the outset. While some feared it would result in a dearth of future competitions (and certainly the tone of the announcement seemed to suggest this), it is encouraging to see that the company is learning from its mistakes – at least in principle.

Much has changed within Arena 77 over the past month. Citing a desire to focus more on his studies, Adrian "Nexorsist" de Winter has stepped down as Tournament Director. Replacing him in this pivotal role will be

the woman sometimes dubbed the mother of South African gaming: Louise "Chronic" van der Bijl. With a long history in the local community and plenty of tournament management experience herself, Louise's appointment bodes well for an organisation in need of reinvigoration.

The next major event on the horizon is of course rAge 2007, quickly becoming the most anticipated on the South African e-sports calendar. While there are no trips overseas up for grabs, the prize money is typically higher and the exposure greater, resulting in more participants and so higher standards of play.

Although, perhaps unsurprisingly, the number of tournaments at rAge 2007 has been scaled back from last year. At the time of going to press, two official competitions had been announced – *Counter-Strike 1.6*

and *Counter-Strike: Source*. The two games may seem rather similar, but the decision to support both reflects the sharp divide between the two communities. It also tells the story of the CS series' popularity in South Africa, which is far greater than that of any other competitive title.

Pessimists will point out that there is less variety on the table this year, but considering recent developments this level of support is better than expected. There will also be – as there is every year – a range of informal tournaments organised by communities within the NAG LAN, which this year sits at a jaw-dropping 1,500 potential attendees. The LAN has consistently improved both its capacity and its administration (last year setting a new South African record), with 2007 shaping up to be no different. **NAG**

TABULA RASA

<http://eu.playtr.com/eu/>

RIGHT AFTER THE INTERVIEW with Richard Garriott and Starr Long, NAG Magazine received a few *Tabula Rasa* beta keys so that we could dive into the current closed beta and give the game a look for ourselves. We settled in for a night, fired it up and created new soldiers in the war against the Bane.

Tabula Rasa does not lack in the visual department and it is obvious that a lot of attention has been placed on the visual aesthetic of the environments and overall feel of the game. With everything set to low detail there is still enough visual stimulation to make things pleasing, but only at maximum did things really look more interesting than usual MMO offerings. Certain graphical options were disabled for the sake of the beta, so the game should look even better on release.

Our first steps were taken inside a solo instanced tutorial mission that starts right after character creation, we could take our time to get used to things without fear of being left behind. An NPC ran us through some movement and interface tutorials, and then we're off to go blow up some Bane and retake a colony. The instanced mission allowed for an immediate sense of being in a crafted experience, deeper and more involved than just killing random creatures. Drop-ships swooped down and beamed in Bane, friendly NPC soldiers ran with us and attacked their own targets, helping immensely with the push towards the goal and overall it felt much more like a single-player game than an MMO.

Once the tutorial was over, we got beamed to a planet and on to the Dynamic Battlefield which represents the more familiar MMO scene - a giant landscape filled with creatures that wander around as well as various NPC characters that give you missions and then the enemies those quests usually ask you to take out. Many other players were running around doing missions and chatting to each other, although we refrained from communicating with other players textually due to the kludgy interface design. Hopefully, the difficult and counter-intuitive nature of social interactions in *Tabula Rasa* is only the result of the beta containing unfinished user-interface elements.

From this point it became the familiar (albeit perhaps temporary) MMO movements of getting a mission, killing or retrieving what is on the mission checklist and then returning for your reward. The Dynamic Battlefield element seemed unimplemented or disabled at the time, the other two outposts on the map were taken by Bane and players could not retake them. Later in the beta, one of the outposts was manually set to player control again, which opened up new missions and storekeepers as well as the crafting stations. Crafting can only be done by extremely high level players (30+ in the beta) so we did not have time to delve into the crafting itself. On the surface, it looked like one has to buy or find "recipes", collect or buy the required materials for the construction of the item and then it's a matter of how high your



crafting has been pushed.

Many of the elements in *Tabula Rasa* feel unfinished or incomplete (not unexpected in an MMO beta), and while the combat system is indeed very immediate and much more like a shooter or action game, the way that the screen fills with numbers after each shot as well as the "lag" between when the player shoots and how enemies react to those shots made the experience feel very ethereal and disconnected. Nothing in the beta felt especially new for the MMO genre however, as this type of combat system has already been tried before in *Auto Assault* and the instanced mission zones were also a big part of what *Guild Wars* pioneered.

It's obvious that *Tabula Rasa* is a combination of many ideas from many MMOs which may or may not work to form a cohesive whole after more development.

If certain elements are addressed, the interface cleaned up and the instanced missions are crafted with care, *Tabula Rasa* looks like it could easily become its own pillar in the MMO genre and perhaps even push the envelope a little.

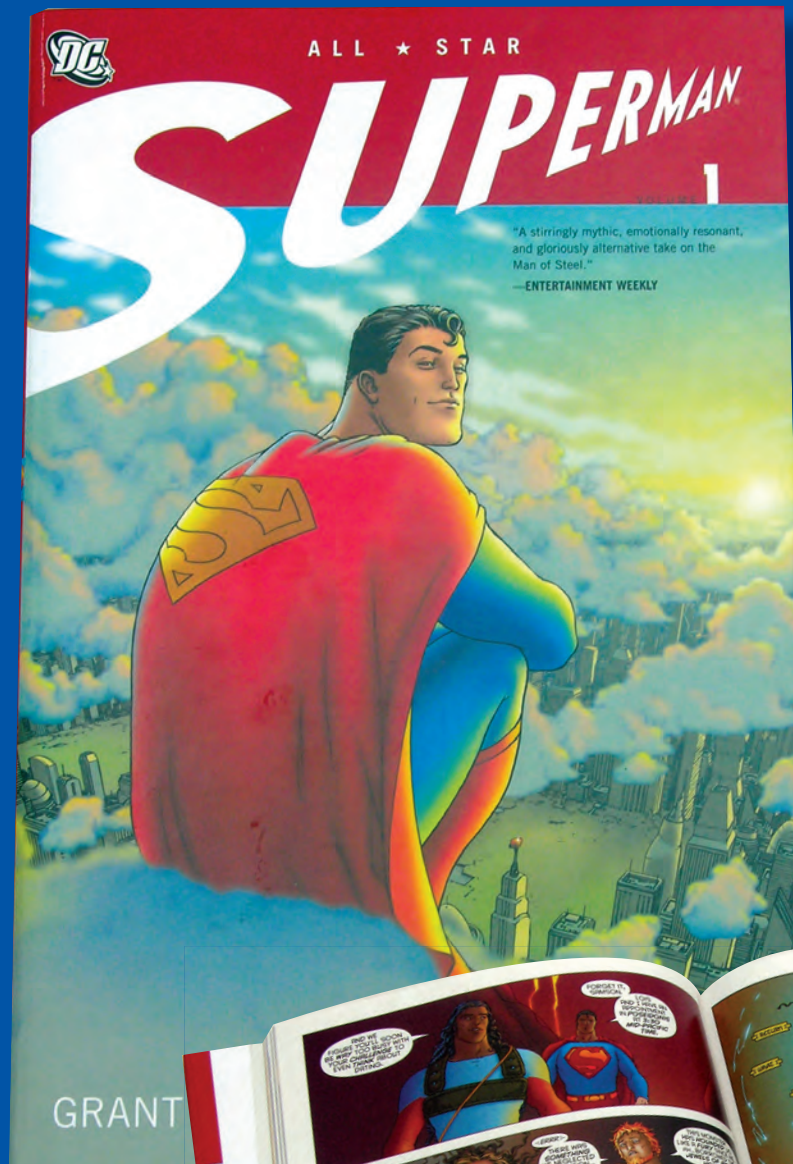
Miktar "I poisoned the cupcakes of kings!" Dracon

SECOND OPINION

I'm not exactly new to the NCSoft stable. As a CoH veteran back to the beta test days and a tester of *Auto Assault*, and having played some of the others like *Dungeon Lords*, I've seen a lot of what they have on offer. *Tabula Rasa* aims to be some kind of re-imagining of the MMO concept, but from what I've seen I think it's a bit like this: Somewhere at NCSoft are hats. In these hats are papers, with ideas jotted down on them. When new MMOs come out, they take papers out of the hats, and use the ideas. *Tabula Rasa* = CoH instanced missions - CoH awesome theme + *Auto Assault* combat system - cool cars + AA's overcomplicated crafting + Exteel sci-fi theme - cool giant robots + plot involving aliens - *Dungeon Runners*' humor + UO creator's name slapped on.

The truth hurts. So does information overload from the interface and the "well now what do we do?" factor. In all fairness, it's still beta. CoH cleaned up a lot near the end of beta, but *Tabula Rasa* just leaves me feeling like I've seen it all before somewhere, and I got bored pretty quick. It's got some nice stuff but I think it will suffer *Auto Assault*'s fate - too complicated for the audience it's trying to appeal to and too different for the hardcore.

GLdm



10 x graphic novels valued at R199 each

SMs charged at R2 each

Competition closes 1 October 2007

Winners will be notified by phone

**ENTER THE SUPERMAN
COMPETITION AND
STAND A CHANCE
TO WIN ONE OF TEN
SUPERMAN GRAPHIC
NOVELS, KINDLY
SPONSORED BY
COSMIC COMICS.**

**To enter, SMS
the keyword
'Superman' to
34110.**



Cosmic Comics Blackheath

Shop 33 Heathway Square, Beyers Naude Drive, Blackheath, Randburg, Tel: (011) 476-9640

Cosmic Comics Clearwater Mall

Cnr Hendrik Potgieter & Christiaan De Wet Street, Strubensvalley, Roodepoort, Tel: (011) 475-8750

COSMIC COMICS

www.comicsandtoyswarehouse.com

PRACTICAL DATA STRUCTURES

LAST MONTH WE COVERED A FEW TYPICAL GAME DATA STRUCTURES FROM A THEORETICAL POINT OF VIEW, EXPLAINING HOW A SIMPLE IDEA LIKE A LINKED LIST CAN EVOLVE INTO COMPLEX AND EXTREMELY USEFUL STRUCTURES THAT MAKE LIFE A LOT EASIER... NOW IT'S TIME TO TALK ABOUT EXACTLY *HOW* THEY IMPROVE OUR LIVES AS GAME DEVELOPERS.

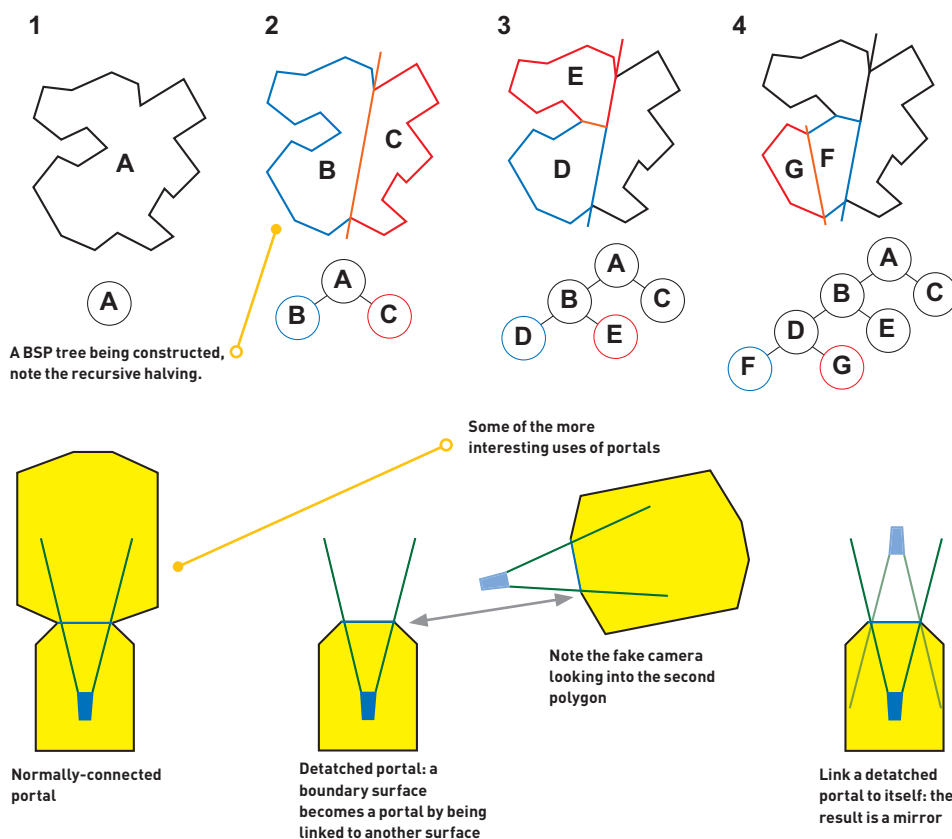
DATA STRUCTURES AND PERFORMANCE

WHEN YOU GET RIGHT down to it, a game is a collection of different types of data, just like we mentioned last month. However, it's not the data that makes the game: It's the interactions between that data. No matter how many cool-looking creatures are in the latest MMO, it'll be a boring game if you can't run around in the game world and destroy said creatures for tiny amounts of experience, grinding away to get a better character... Those interactions between different swathes of data are the bread and butter of any game: Collision detection between your character and the world, your character and the creatures, projectiles and you and the creatures, projectiles and the world; Drawing the correct objects in the correct places in the correct order, etc.

The problem is that these interactions need to happen every single frame, otherwise the game looks broken and doesn't respond properly, making it no fun. If we have too many interactions or operations every frame, the game will run slowly – also killing the fun. The trick is try and only do the operations that are going to matter to the game right now, here's an example: If you have a game world with 10 000 collidable objects in it, then in each frame you're going to have to test each object against every other object to see if they collide. Not a big deal, until you realise that we've just recommended doing nearly 100 million tests ($10\,000 * 9999$) every single frame! Granted, you could lower that to just under 50 million tests using nested for loops ($(9999 / 2) * 10\,000$), but when you consider that for each object you'll have an average of 2 actual collisions – one with the floor and one with another object – then you're wasting your time calculating all the other objects... If only there was a way to only test objects that were close together!

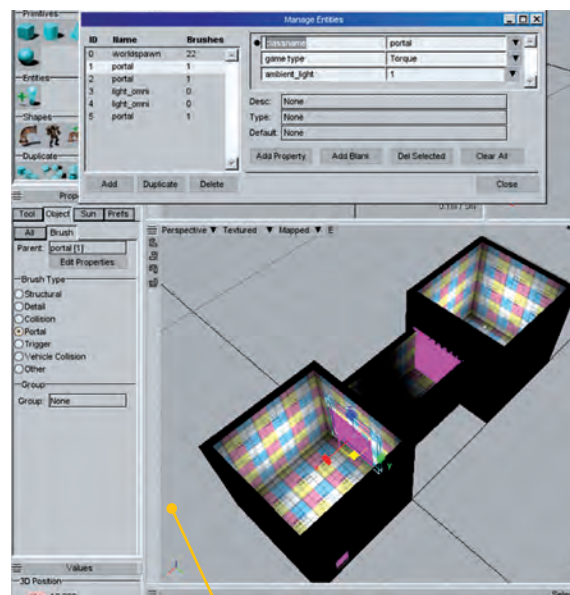
SPATIAL-RELATIONSHIP STRUCTURES

Interactivity requirements like collision detection and reaction aren't the only problems that can be heavily optimised by taking positional information into account. The largest area that's driven the development of spatial data structures is the needs of graphics systems, especially early 3D graphics. For many years, this is where all the noise and sizzle was in game development. The *Quake* family of engines used BSP (Binary Space Partition) trees, while Unreal-engine games used portal systems. Fans and hobbyist developers argued endlessly about which was "best"... But we're getting ahead of ourselves here: The key thing to remember is that you need to pick and choose data structures that best solve the problems your game presents, sometimes that will be a mishmash of multiple systems and ideas, other times you'll just be able to plug in a standardised



structure and have it magically make things better. But you can't do either if you're not up to speed with the different styles and types of structures out there.

We've mentioned BSP trees before. The logic is simple: Split your world/map data into two equal halves along a polygon (imagine that polygon slicing the world in half like a huge knife), then split each of those halves again. Repeat. At the end of that process, when you only have two or three polygons on the same plane in each node, you have a BSP tree. This is extremely useful when you have to do things like decide which map polygons to draw, relative to where the player is – You obviously don't want to waste time trying to draw things that are either invisible or occluded by other polygons, that'll slow your game down and use up time you could be doing something else in. BSP trees are also great when you need to collide objects with the world: Typically you'd collide on a polygon-by-polygon basis, which in a big map can mean hundreds of thousands of polys to test against your object, bringing us back to our scary maths of our 50 million calculation example up above. Using a BSP tree you can eliminate half the polygons in the map with just one test: Which side of the splitting poly is this object? As you go down the tree, you end up removing half the remaining polys with each test, so you end up only doing a fraction of the number of tests you'd do without a clever data structure (even



Portals in the Torque Engine

less if you happen to get lucky and be colliding with a splitting polygon). This is what enabled *Quake* to have large, complex maps (at the time). But BSPs generally don't help you with object-object interactions, unless you do some rather unorthodox futzing with them.

Enter Octrees, built especially to optimise the problem of having many objects around that could interact with each other. Again, the implementation is simple: If you think of a regular 3D space, a cube for instance; Then you can split that cube up into eight smaller, identical cubes; Each of those cubes can be split into eight more, even smaller cubes, etc. Hence the name: Octree – a tree data structure with eight branches at each level. To use an octree, you insert objects into the smallest cube that can fully contain them, splitting large objects like entire maps into smaller groups of polygons. That way, when it's time to collide objects against each other, you only need to test each object against the other objects inside the same cube. A large object might test against two or three entire smaller cubes that are part of the same "parent" cube as it is, if it collides with any of those cubes, it simply tests against each object or smaller cube stored within. Easy. The only problem occurs when objects move around inside the world and overlap a neat cube boundary. The easiest way to deal with that is to move the object up into the parent cube until it no longer overlaps... Some implementations do fancy things like keeping shadow copies of boundary objects in multiple smaller cubes, others just test against the

cubes that are overlapped too. So, compared to a BSP tree, the testing logic as you go down each layer of the tree is a little more complicated (three "which side of a plane" tests instead of one – think about it, you'll figure it out) but you eliminate 7/8ths of the world at a time instead of only 1/2 of it. Also, while BSPs tend to be pre-calculated by a map editor, octrees can be dynamic with very little effort, making them very useful for large game worlds populated by many objects.

But game worlds are very seldom regularly shaped, if everything were square then they'd be a bit too boring... So automatic subdivision systems such as octrees aren't always optimal, which is why Portal systems were born. A portal is nothing more than an invisible section of your game world that joins two sections (or cells) together. This join is useful when trying to draw your game world and also when interacting within it, via collisions: First you consider the current cell that your camera/object/player/whatever is in, if the camera can see a portal (or the interaction involves one in some other way), take the cells that it links to into account too. Cells themselves can be simple structures like convex polygons, or more detailed environments (each made up of their own BSP, octree or other data structures). Clever placement of portals then splits your world up into more manageable lumps: Doorways, windows and corridors are often perfect spots for portals... Try playing a bit of UT and looking for the portals.

There are many other ways to use

QUESTION BOX

Q: "Is there a way to set the opacity of images in Game Maker?" – RedNax

A: You can use the image_alpha variable on an object to change its overall alpha transparency. There are other ways to change alpha with specific drawing commands that accept an alpha parameter, look up "draw_" in GM's help index. GM7 also added the ability to load images with alpha channels (things like tga files) which should allow for graduated transparency without having to register, previously you had to load a separate black and white sprite and use the registered-only command sprite_set_image_alpha(sprite, alphaSprite) to change the alpha channel.

positional information to optimise your game data, although many of them start getting wondrously complex rather quickly. If you're keen on practising your Google-Fu, try out these terms: Occlusion culling, View frustum, KD trees and finally for the particularly adventurous, terrain subdivision and R.O.A.M.

LOGICALLY ARRANGED DATA

Continuously figuring out smarter and smarter ways to make data resemble your actual game-world at a technical level isn't the only route available to clever game developers: There are other ways to apply a bit of thinking to your game and logically arrange your data. Of course, most are game-specific and are simply a matter of sticking various data structures together in different ways that make sense at the time. Take an inventory for instance, which makes more sense: Having a huge array of items with flags for which are in various bags or being worn by the player, vs. a custom tree structure that stores objects within logical "bags" and specific locations on a player-structure when worn? One is easy to use and makes sense, the other involves huge amounts of searching to see what is actually where. We'll let you decide which is which...

The largest amount of data that needs to be logically coherent tends to be resources: Sound files, textures, models and animations. In fact, the way that you store and manage those is often highly important to your game's performance, but we'll take a look at that entire kettle of fish in another article. **NAG**

entertainment[africa.com](http://entertainmentafrica.com)

win...win...win...win...win...



real stuff to really win... all the time!

entertainment[africa.com](http://entertainmentafrica.com)

gaming music movies gadgets prizes!

24/7 - 365

entertainment[africa.com](http://entertainmentafrica.com)

music reviews movies exclusives events gaming mobile firstplays tracks cinema bands streams news promos downloads trailers forums videos dvds-umd comps gadgets showtimes charts interviews artists

MOVIES

ON THE TUBE: METALCALYPSE

WHILE YOU ARE KILLING time watching Adult Swim shows finally surface in sunny South Africa (courtesy of the Go channel), NAG's staff and its wide network of media-obsessed torrent-abusing acquaintances are still at the cutting edge of what you will be watching. And what you will be watching, without a doubt, is the most Brutal show ever made. It's really Metal. Because if it isn't Brutal and Metal, then Dethklok, the death metal band in *Metalocalypse*, simply won't have anything to do with it. Birthed from talent that worked on (but didn't

wrote) the likes of *Squidbillies*, *Aqua Teen Hunger Force* and *The Venture Bros*, the show is described as *Spinal Tap* meets *Scoobie Doo* meets Norway. Expect lots of death, adult humor, exploding heads, cheesy metal music videos, giant monsters, the inability to buy groceries and a kick-ass soundtrack. *Guitar Hero 2* owners can even sample Dethklok's sound when they play the bonus song Thunderhorse. But forget all of that. It's simply the funniest thing on Adult Swim since *Harvey Birdman* and *Aqua Teen*. And it's Brutal. And Metal. Got that?



The Last King of Scotland

Cast: Forest Whitaker, James McAvoy, Kerry Washington
Director: Kevin Macdonald
Genre: Thriller
Rating: 16 LNSV

A young Scottish doctor breaks out of the restrictions of his home life and heads to work in a medical missionary in Uganda. While there, he manages to become close to Idi Amin, the new president thanks to a recent military coup. But he slowly discovers that Amin, who remains infamous as one of Africa's most brutal modern dictators, is a dangerous and quite possibly mad ruler who has no problem with killing all who opposes him.

The movie: Based on a novel, this is a fictional story, but it incorporates the infamous military ruler Amin into its story. It's really more about the young doctor and while the movie says it brings more dimension to Amin than the reputation he got solely through newspaper reports, you don't ever really feel at ease with him in a scene. That might be thanks to Forrest Whitaker, who delivers an exceptional performance that arguably does the dictator a lot of justice. It has its flaws, but the overall package is brutal, funny and very captivating.

The DVD: There is plenty of making-of promotional stuff as well as commentary. A proper documentary about Amin would have been nice, though.



COMICS

Written by Clive Burmeister

The Programme #1

Format: Comic Series
Publisher: WildStorm
Writer: Peter Milligan
Artist: CP Smith
Price: R24.50

Something terrible happened to the American forces fighting in Talibanistan, something inconceivable. Thousands are dead, and everyone is talking about what happened, and how? With the sheer might of the American forces stationed in the Middle East, what could shake the foundations of the free world this much? Was it something super powered? No, that's nonsense, fiction. Perhaps it was a nuclear attack of some sort? Possibly. But why then is the CIA tracking down a middle-aged, no-body bar owner with a past shrouded in mystery, to aid them? Germany's hero? Russia's bane? Indeed! But what has he to do with the war in the Middle East? Interested? Pick up a copy of *The Programme* then, I think it's going to be a good one, and it definitely has me interested in uncovering more of its developing story line in the next available issue.



Annihilation: Conquest - Wraith #1 (of 4)

Format: Comic Mini-Series
Publisher: Marvel
Writer: Javier Grillo-Marxuach
Artist: Kyle Hotz
Price: R24.95

He's not living, but he lives. He's not the savior of the Kree race, but he's their only hope at freedom. He has no name, he's a wraith. The Annihilation saga unfolds in this new mini series, where the Kree Empire is now over run by a strange techno-organic race known as the Phalanx. Will this unknown individual end out helping the Kree in their struggle against their invaders? If you haven't been following the Annihilation story, it's okay as the comic gives you a little bit of background before plunging you into the action, but you may still be a little lost. But even with that in mind, it looks to be an interesting story, with similarities to the Matrix and Star Trek's "Borg", with a bit of a sci-fi thriller feel thrown in for good measure.



300

Cast: Gerard Butler, Lena Headey, David Wenham
Director: Zack Snyder
Genre: Action
Rating: 16 VS

When the Persian army marched onto the Greek city states, they give Sparta the option of surrender or annihilation. The king of Sparta opts to take his chances with the second choice, but then has to defy the oracle and Sparta's elders, who forbid him to go to war. Instead he takes 300 of his 'bodyguard' to a narrow pass where the Spartans hold off a Persian army of tens of thousands for three days. Their sacrifice eventually leads to the Greek states allying together and defeating the Persians.

The Movie: This is the movie adaptation of Frank Miller's interpretation of a legend retold many, many times. The actual history of this battle is slightly different, but *300* never aims to be realistic or accurate. Instead it's like a really good legend told around a campfire, with plenty of stylized visuals, hulking monsters and over-the-top camera work to cement it all in. It's the way a good story should be told – all heroics, blood and testosterone without bogging us down too much by separating fact from fiction. A must-see and another hit for *Dawn of the Dead*'s director.

The DVD: The 2 disc edition has some nice of complimentary material. Apart from commentary, the features look at the history of the battle, interpreting the graphic novel over to a movie and an interview with Frank Miller. Alas, nothing looks at how the special effects were designed and created.



Public Enemy

Cast: Sul Kyung-gu, Cho Gyu-hwan
Director: Kang Woo-suk
Genre: Thriller
Rating: 18

A corrupt cop has his way about town, shaking down crooks and narrowly escaping investigation for his activities when his partner shoots himself and his captain is arrested. Suddenly without his usual group of criminal officers, he works at offloading drugs they took from a gang. Then while on a stake-out, he gets cut by a stranger in a raincoat – a stranger who just came from killing an old couple brutally with a hunting knife. Suddenly a hardened cop used to crime just being a way of society has to face true evil in a psychopath who will kill anyone at the drop of a hat.

The movie: *Public Enemy* is actually a dark comedy as well, but since it's a South Korean movie, unless you understand the culture (we don't) most of the funny bits go over your head. But that still leaves a violent crime thriller that puts a bad cop against *American Psycho*. It doesn't all make sense (that culture gap again), but if you like bad cops and serial killers, it's worth watching.

The DVD: Being a Tartan Extreme release, you can expect at least the minimum of extras. There's a making-of, a deleted scene, music video and an inlay talking about the movie and its significance in the Korean film canon.



The Prestige

Cast: Hugh Jackman, Christian Bale, Michael Caine
Director: Christopher Nolan
Genre: Thriller
Rating: 13 V

Set in the Victorian era, two stage magicians go into separate careers after one's wife is killed in an illusion stunt. The rivalry starts off bitter enough, but soon becomes completely malicious and hate-filled. Then one magician creates a fantastic illusion driving the other to try and figure it out, no matter what the cost.

The Movie: It's hard to figure out of *The Prestige* is being too clever or if we're too stupid to see it for what it is. On the one hand you have a sharp story about betrayal and illusion, but on the other the story embraces the theme of illusions so much that it keeps making twists and turns. So often, in fact, that you are hardly surprised after a while, even if you don't see things coming. Still, it's a good movie and you get to see David Bowie as the eerie Tesla and his strange electrical contraptions. *The Prestige* is more fantastical than you might have guessed.

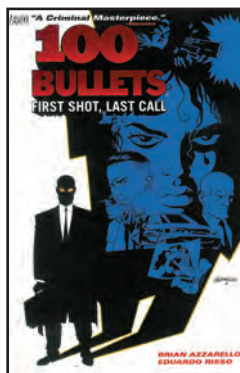
The DVD: Commentary and a look at the movie's art/visual direction.



100 Bullets – First Shot, Last Call – Volume 1

Format: Graphic Novel
Publisher: Vertigo
Writer: Brian Azzarello
Artist: Eduardo Risso
Price: R\$4.95

So life has wronged you in some way, maybe a loved one was murdered, or somebody framed you for a crime you didn't commit, or some other event transpired and the guilty party walked... Then maybe you will meet Agent Graves, a mysterious man who will approach you when you least expect it and offer you a solution for the injustice you have suffered, in the form of a attaché case full of detailed proof of who is responsible for the crime, and gun with 100 untraceable bullets and the guarantee that you will not suffer at the hands of the police department when using it. Sound intriguing? It is! 100 Bullets is an amazing story, combining thrilling crime fiction with suspense and action, and packaging it all together in a nicely priced Graphic Novel. This one comes very highly recommended.



Fell – Feral City - Volume 1

Format: Graphic Novel
Publisher: Image
Writer: Warren Ellis
Artist: Ben Templesmith
Price: R124.95

Detective Richard Fell has been transferred from the across the bridge, to a decrepit crime infested place called Snowtown. With only four homicide detectives and an insane Captain, and one Police Department for the entire area, murder and mayhem is a feature on every street. But detective Fell isn't about to let that get in his way, and he jumps right into the thick of it, getting branded, knifed twice, beaten up and shot at in his first few weeks on the job. Expertly written, with dark sketchy art that captures the menace of the setting perfectly. This book is one of the best I've ever read. Warren Ellis is a well of insightful and disturbing ideas which capture the true horror of the town, and his black humour brings it all together into its own freakish harmony. Read it.



FIGURINES



With
removable
skirt!

Shii Arisugawa

Series: The Art of Shunja Yamashita
RRP: R 419.00
Supplier: Cosmic Comics
Website: www.comicsandtoyswarehouse.com

110mm broad, 280mm up

Lord Voldemort

Series: Harry Potter Series 1
RRP: R139.00
Supplier: Cosmic Comics
Website: www.comicsandtoyswarehouse.com



150mm broad, 200mm up

COMICS

Kingdom Come

Format: Omnibus
Publisher: DC Comics
Writer: Mark Waid
Artist: Alex Ross
Price: R149.00

Originally a four-issue comic book limited series published in 1996, *Kingdom Come* is set 20 years into the future of the current DC Universe. It deals with a growing conflict between "traditional" superheroes (Superman, Wonder Woman and the Justice League) and a growing population of mostly amoral and horribly irresponsible new vigilantes. In the middle sits Batman and his team, desperately trying to contain the escalating disaster as well as thwart Lex Luthor's machinations.

Stunningly painted in gouache (a watercolour executed with opaque watercolours mixed with gum), *Kingdom Come* uses heavy biblical apocalyptic imagery to set the tone and texture of the story - a story that in itself is simply the most flawlessly executed grand opus to yet grace the pages of a DC production. *Kingdom Come* is a heavy, heady, ponderous and thoughtful read that defies what the "older" generation may think of the worth of a comic book, and startles the perceptions of the "younger" generation who may consider comic books too childish.

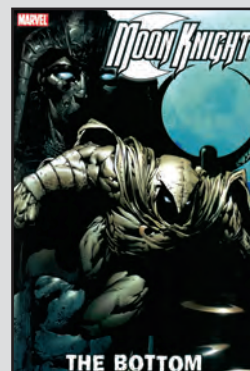


Moon Knight: The Bottom

Format: Omnibus
Publisher: Marvel Comics
Writer: Charlie Huston
Artist: David Finch
Price: R149

Marc Spector aka. *Moon Knight* was created by Doug Moench and Don Perlin, first appearing in *Werewolf by Night* #32 back in 1975. Originally designed as an enemy to the title character, *Moon Knight* proved popular with readers and after making cameo appearances in several other comic books (including *Spectacular Spider-Man* and *Defenders*) gained his own ongoing series.

As the avatar of death and vengeance for the Egyptian god Khonshu, Marc Spector had a reason to live. Now, his god has forsaken him, leaving him a battered, broken wreck on the verge of yielding to the dark. "The Bottom" comes with a parental advisory label and rightfully so - the stark, harsh visuals and no-holds-barred dialogue deliver and incredible one-two punch usually only found in the more poignant Dark Knight issues. As a self-contained story arc, "The Bottom" is worth the price of admission.





Misty May

Series: Mon-Sieur Bome Collection Vol. 20
RRP: R249.00
Supplier: Cosmic Comics
Website: www.comicsandtoyswarehouse.com

220mm broad, 90mm up



Spacebot

Series: Qees Series 01
RRP: R 59.00 ea. (incl. key chain)
Supplier: Cosmic Comics
Website: www.comicsandtoyswarehouse.com



35mm broad, 65mm up

The Boys

Format: Graphic Novel
Publisher: Dynamite
Writer: Garth Ennis
Artist: Darick Robertson
Price: R149



In a world full of super heroes, who keeps an eye on the people with all the special powers? That responsibility falls on the shoulder of *The Boys*, a group of very dangerous CIA-backed individuals who have to keep an eye on superheroes and intervene when necessary. That intervention would usually require deadly force, since superheroes don't seem to always listen, so it's probably a good thing that members of *The Boys* have a few chips on their shoulders courtesy of some super being causing them serious grief at a point in their lives.

More to the point, this violent and extreme story is brought to us courtesy of Garth Ennis, a comic writing legend responsible for the likes of *Preacher* and *The Darkness*, and Darick Robertson, best known for his excellent illustration work in *Transmetropolitan*. If any of those names or titles appeal to you, you really have to get *The Boys*. Here's a little more incentive: apparently the comic was originally going to be published by Vertigo, but when it saw how depraved and violent it was, the comic house turned down the offer and it was instead taken to Dynamite.



The Exterminators

Format: Graphic Novel
Publisher: Vertigo
Writer: Simon Oliver
Artist: Tony Moore
Price: R99



This story seems to start deceptively simple. The opening lines talk about the fall of Rome – how an entire empire was brought to its knees courtesy of the black plague carried by fleas hitching a ride on rats that joined Roman legionaries going back home after their conquests on the continents. Then it slips into the sombre but humble world of *The Exterminators*, a graphic novel following Henry James, a former jailbird who now tries to make ends meet in the dirty world of extermination – from rodents to bugs, no job too small or big. But at the same time a scientist discovered that certain populations of cockroaches are not only growing resistant to a specific type of heavy-duty bug poison – it might make them a lot bigger and stronger if they were exposed to it. The same chemical also turns out to be a highly potent yet inevitably lethal drug if you inject it directly. Henry discovers this when a co-worker addicted to the stuff literally explodes. There's something more going on here, but all Henry wants to do is his job. That is about to get a lot more complicated. A brilliant left-of-field read with very good artwork that is both disarming and yet very intense at the same time.



RAVEN'S LOFT

X-RATED

WELL, THE TENTH EDITION release has come and gone, and it will be old hat to some of you, but nevertheless I would like to touch on the new set, and discuss general impressions.

Some players, when looking at the preview material prior to set's release, expressed concern that the overall complexity level of the set had risen, and that this could result in the game being more difficult for novices to pick up. However, I have taught many people the game, and so have some of my experienced friends, and believe me when I tell you that we do not restrict ourselves to vanilla cards when doing so! In fact, after the rudimentary fundamentals have been grasped, we generally hurry to demonstrate as wide a variety of options as possible, in order to impress upon our understudies the infinite variation to be found in the game. So, in light of this, I think this slight upping of this Core Set's complexity is, in fact, a very positive thing. Particularly when you consider that experienced players will also find it more interesting. Furthermore, the inclusion of a number of notable legends from the game's past adds flavour to the set, as well as reinvigorating it with nostalgic classics.

Several omissions from this Core Set, however, we find rather puzzling. One of the most notable ones is Phyrexian Arena. That's right, folks, for those of you who were not aware of this – Phyrexian Arena, a mainstay in black decks for some time (both aggressive decks and controlling decks) has been left out in the cold. What's even more puzzling is the fact that it has not really been replaced with any trade-life-for-cards spells other than the once-off Phyrexian Rager. On the other hand, Phyrexian Vault makes a welcome return, allowing you to sacrifice a creature for a card. So, it looks like those wishing for a way to emulate the Phyrexian Arena will need to develop innovative ways to reuse the Rager. (Here are some ideas: "rescue" creatures such as Whitemane Lion, reanimation such as Debtors' Knell, "flicker" effects such as Momentary Blink or Voyager Staff, copy effects such as Clone or Vesuvan Shapeshifter, though the latter isn't optimal.)

Another baffling decision on Wizards' part is the omission of Stone Rain. Besides basic lands, this is the most oft-reprinted card in Magic history, having appeared in every previous Core Set and numerous expansions. It being left out of Tenth Edition is very weird indeed. However, such a move is not entirely without precedent – Birds of Paradise didn't make it into Ninth Edition, but returned in the very next expansion to be printed, Ravnica. I wonder whether something similar will take place with this one... Interestingly enough, there is a three-casting-cost land destruction sorcery in Tenth – in black. Rain of Tears is back, originally printed in Mercadian Masques.

PEEKING BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Now, some behind-the-scenes stuff. Some of you may have noticed that Ninth Edition had much overlap with Eighth. My theory

for this was that Wizards of the Coast was narrowing down the range of cards that make up an ideal core set. This is, in fact, more or less exactly what was happening – the company was busy with a philosophy that revolved around a "universal core set", which would be exactly what I had speculated: a core set that would remain essentially static in repeated printings. However, Wizards eventually abandoned this idea, which is why Tenth Edition departs so radically from Ninth. Nevertheless, it is good to see that the "pain-lands" are now a staple (and the fact that Wrath of God did not leave the set!), and some other colour-defining cards have remained, such as Boomerang. Here we have another example of interesting policy reversal. When Ninth was put together, Wizards deemed Boomerang and Unsummon to be too similar to coexist in the same set, and Unsummon was dropped, on the grounds

that tournament players in particular would use the more versatile card. However, its two-blue casting cost, as opposed to Unsummon's one-blue, makes it an inferior card in certain specific decks, and it makes a welcome comeback in Tenth Edition.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE...

Some information has come to light regarding the sets to follow the release of Tenth Edition. While it is common knowledge that the next set will be called Lorwyn, it is a less-known fact that it will be the first set in a two-set block, as opposed to the usual three-set structure. The block following that one will also consist of two expansions. These two "mini-blocks", while separate per se, will be treated as one block for the purposes of tournament formats. This will have the overall result of making the Standard format larger, just as the "bonus set" Cold Snap is doing right now. **NAG**

Alex Jelagin



SUBSCRIBE AND win!



The first three new subscribers will win a copy of Guild Wars: Eye of the North sponsored by 

SUBSCRIBE TO NAG FOR R380 & SAVE 20%

Full Name: _____

Postal Address: _____

Age: _____ Cellular: _____

Home Tel: _____ E-mail: _____

Payment Method:

Bank deposit ☐ Cheque ☐ Postal order ☐ Visa/Mastercard ☐

For Credit Card Payment only:

Credit card number: _____

Expiry date: _____ CVV number: _____

Signature: _____

Bank Account details:

[use these details when depositing money into our bank account]

Tide Media - Nedbank Fourways
Account Number: 1684 112 117
Branch Code: 168 405

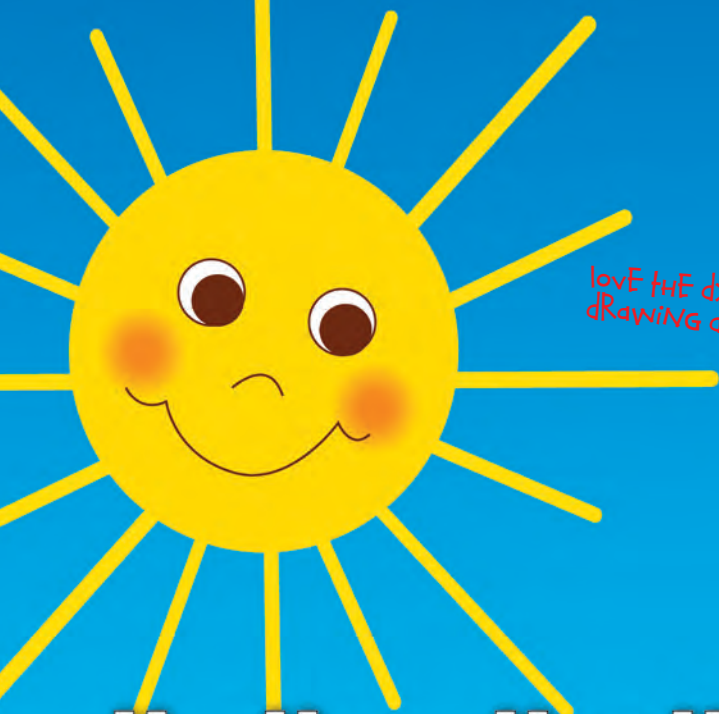
Once you have paid the money into our account, fax a copy of the subscription form plus the bank deposit slip to [011] 704-4120. No deposit slip = no subscription.

Please make cheques and postal orders out to Tide Media and then post the completed form to NAG Subscription Department, P.O. Box 237, Olivedale, 2158

For further information, please contact the subscription office on [011] 704-2679 from 09:00 - 15:00, e-mail subs@tidemedia.co.za or fax [011] 704-4120

Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery of your first issue.

Please note that all outlined subscription rates and offers are only valid for postal addresses in South Africa. If you live outside the borders of South Africa and would like to receive the magazine on a monthly basis, please contact the subscriptions department on subs@tidemedia.co.za directly for pricing.



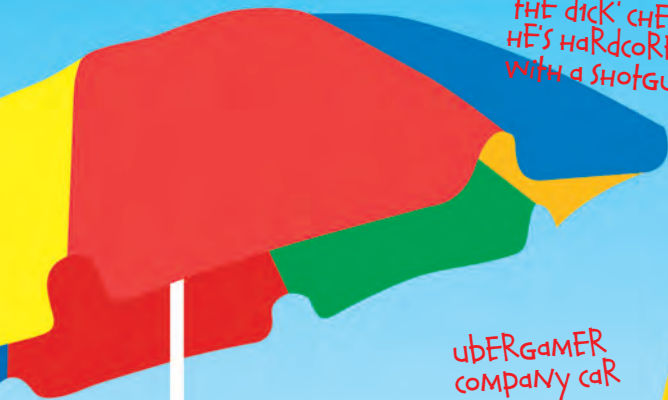
love the dx10
drawing distance

ÜBĒRGÄMĒR

UBERGAMER DOES
NOT COME TO E³.
E³ COMES TO US!
SO WE WENT TO
AFGHANISTAN!

@ε³

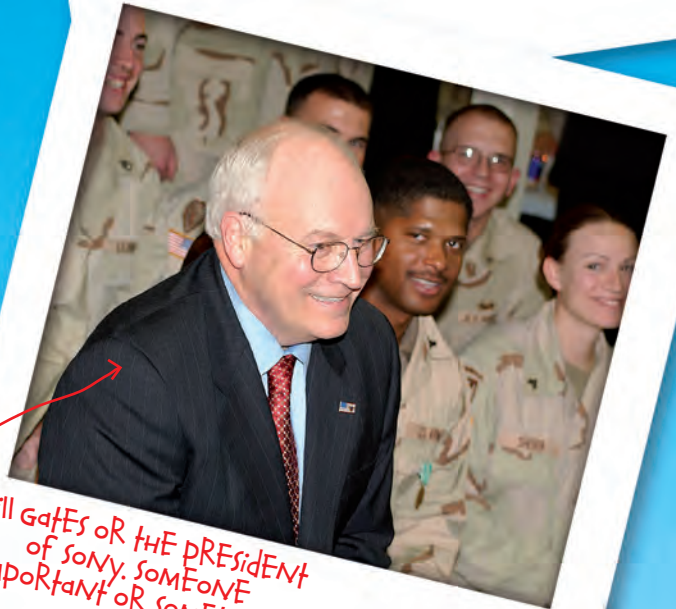
PRO GAMER dick
THE dick' CHENEY
HE'S HARDCORE
WITH A SHOTGUN



UBERGAMER
company car



THE DESIGN TEAM at THE
AMERICA'S ARMY booth



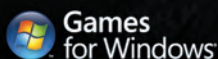
bill gates or THE PRESIDENT
of Sony. SOMEONE
important or something



SERIOUSLY GREAT show, but
THE booth babes sucked

CLIVE BARKER'S JERICHO™

"THE MOST DISGUSTING THING
WE HAVE EVER COVERED. EVER."
PC ZONE



PLAYSTATION 3



© 2006 Imagica Productions, Inc and Alchemic Productions. All rights reserved. "Jericho"™ is a trademark of Imagica Productions, Inc and Alchemic Productions. "Codemasters"® is a registered trademark owned by The Codemasters Software Company Limited ("Codemasters"). The Codemasters logo is a trademark of Codemasters. All other copyrights or trademarks are the property of their respective owners and are being used under license. Developed by Mercury Steam Entertainment Inc and published by Codemasters. "PS3" is a trademark or registered trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

ASUS recommends Windows Vista™ Home Premium



Mobile Warrior



Let's game

Powerful High-Speed Performance for Virtual Enjoyment Anywhere

The ASUS G1 and G2 notebook series redefine mobile gaming with advance graphics solutions, exclusive display technologies and unique design details. With Direct Flash sidelights, gaming spirit is shared when DirectX 9 support is activated for graphic intense moments. Get a boost and bring the game on anywhere! ASUS G1 and G2 are powered by Intel® Centrino® Duo Mobile Technology.



ASUS Direct Messenger
Information side display updates IM, system status and reminder alerts with zero distraction.



Gaming Hot Keys
The A, W, S and D key are especially marked for convenient access at one glance.



Wireless Video Communication
Built-in high-resolution webcam and speaker allows wire-free video conferencing anywhere without the hassle of tangling wires.



Suit of Armor
The in-mold decorated cover surface provides sturdy protection to the LCD screen and also prevents the paint from chipping off.



G1 Gaming Package (G1 + Backpack + Mouse)



G2 Gaming Package (G2 + Backpack + Mouse)

Gaming Notebook Series- G1/G2

- Intel® Centrino® Duo Mobile Technology
 - Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor T7600/T7400/T7200/T5600/T5500
 - Mobile Intel® 945PM Express Chipset
 - Intel® PRO/Wireless 3945ABG Network Connection
- Genuine Windows® Vista®
 - Genuine Ultimate
 - Genuine Home Premium
- NVIDIA GeForce Go7700 512 Physical VRAM(G1); ATI Mobility® Radeon™ X1700 512 MB Physical VRAM(G2)
- DDRII 533/667MHz, up to 2GB
- 15.4" WXGA/WSXGA+ (G1); 17" WXGA+(G2); Color Shine LCD
- ASUS Video Intelligence Technology
- SATA 80/100/120/160 GB HDD
- DVD Super-Multi with Light Scribe
- Built-in 1.3 mega-pixel webcam

ASUS
Rock Solid · Heart Touching

rectron
www.rectron.co.za

Johannesburg:
Tel: (011) 203 1000
Fax: (011) 203 1135

Cape Town:
Tel: (021) 555 7136
Fax: (021) 555 7187

Durban:
Tel: (031) 571 8839
Fax: (031) 571 8865

Port Elizabeth:
Tel: (041) 398 7082
Fax: (041) 398 7135

Bloemfontein:
Tel: (051) 430 0000
Fax: (051) 430 1144

Intel, the Intel logo, Centrino and the Centrino logo, Intel Core and Core Inside, are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries.